



MATIKA WILBUR (SWINOMISH AND TULALIP)

STRONG HEARTS AND MINDS

CENTERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN
AND GIRLS IN MOVEMENT BUILDING



NATIVE AMERICANS
IN PHILANTHROPY

I grew up on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, raised in my Lakota traditions — attending ceremonies and learning our lifeways. When I was sixteen, I joined the long line of Lakota women leaders when my twin sister and I protested the Bennett County High School “Warrior Homecoming Ceremony” in Martin, South Dakota (a border town to both Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Rosebud Indian Reservation). The “ceremony” consisted of a popularity contest to play the parts of “Big Chief, Medicine Man, and five Warrior Princesses” at this majority non-Native high school. The young women sang “Indian Love Song” while seated cross-legged around a fake fire. The “Medicine Man” danced around the young women to a tom-tom beat who would stop to look in their mouths, ears, and weigh them. The drama played out until he pulled one lucky young woman up to her feet, then offering her as a gift to “Big Chief”. Nothing about this “ceremony” represented my culture or my people. Instead, it mocked and denigrated everything I knew and loved about my people. It left me appalled, shamed, and angry.

This small town of 1,100 had been holding this “ceremony” for 57 years and did not see anything wrong with it — a common mainstream perspective that has allowed these types of outrageously stereotypical racist, sexist and spiritually degrading depictions to continue today in schools and in the media. It took four years of protesting and tribal support to end this “ceremony”. My sister and I are forever changed by it. We learned that, despite long odds and deeply entrenched colonial beliefs, we have important voices rooted in our Lakota culture that have the power to change things to be better. I want every Native woman and girl to understand that they have this power, and for people globally to recognize, respect and listen to this power.

As a Lakota, I have been taught the sacred cycle of life is feminine. The moon. The sun. The earth. You. Me. This is why I believe that the wisdom and worldview of Native women and girls will help heal the world.

I have been blessed to have generations of Native women leaders who have protected me, fought for me, and taught me how to be a leader. Together we have survived centuries of atrocities committed against Mother Earth and our peoples. We are resilient.

But we have remained invisible. The colonial playbook has been to suppress and oppress, and now we have extremely high rates of missing and murdered women.

Now is the time to make visible the invisible: to acknowledge omitted history and break free of false narratives that divide and disempower. We need to return to the Lakota teaching that we have a greater responsibility than just to ourselves through the prayer of Mitakuye Oyasin, “We are all related.”

At Native Americans in Philanthropy we honor our history, our peoples and Mother Earth in our vision to restore Native communities to full health and sustainability by promoting equitable and effective philanthropy in our communities. We launched our research agenda two years ago with *The Indigenous Lifecourse: Strengthening the Health and Well-Being of Native Youth* to begin to re-center Native issues and communities in movement work and in our societal narratives, policies and investments. With this report we continue to build awareness around Native women and girls and advocating for the deep partnerships we need to make an impact.

Join us. Understand us. Stand with us.

Wopila (“With deep gratitude” in Lakota)

SARAH EAGLE HEART
CEO OF NATIVE AMERICANS IN PHILANTHROPY



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO MADE THIS REPORT POSSIBLE:

- > **Chisa Oros Peters at Seventh Generation Fund, Susan Balbas at Na’ah Illahee Fund and Hester Dillon at NoVo Foundation who shared their insights and wisdom from supporting Native women and girls work;**
- > **The Women Empowering Women for Indigenous Nations (WEWIN) 2017 conference attendees who participated in our survey and encouraged our work;**
- > **Casey Family Programs, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Ford Foundation who have provided ongoing support of our research;**
- > **Our Indigenous Women Rise partners, Advance Native Political Leadership, Native Voice Network, Native Voices Rising, National Indian Women’s Resource Center, UltraViolet, The Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas, North American Region, Indigenous Environmental Network, and other key organizations and sisters;**
- > **Chrissie Castro, who helped facilitate the meeting at the Women’s March;**
- > **Rosalee Gonzalez, who helped set the vision for this report; and**
- > **Irene Kao, who led the development of this report.**

WE DEDICATE THIS REPORT TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS, AND FEMALE-IDENTIFIED PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD WHO BRAVELY LEAD AND PERSEVERE IN THE FACE OF MANY CHALLENGES.

INTRODUCTION

NATIVE WOMEN OCCUPY CENTRAL ROLES OF POWER AND INFLUENCE IN AND BEYOND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. THEY ARE LIFE GIVERS, HEALERS, CULTURE BEARERS, AND LEADERS ACROSS DIVERSE CULTURES.

Through centuries of colonialism and genocide, Native women have sown the seeds of resistance and resilience: as woman warriors fighting colonization, vocal advocates for indigenous rights and sovereignty, and activists protecting the earth, families and communities. Their leadership and worldview has influenced organizers and activists across issues and communities, including suffragists and feminists, environmentalists, criminal justice reformers and racial justice advocates.

This report re-centers Native women and girls in all of our communities and movement work. Native families and communities face systemic barriers that are the legacy of colonialism and genocide, and Native women and girls are leading efforts to restore our communities to full health and sustainability. Their work is powered by traditional practices that we identified as key protective factors in our earlier report, *The Indigenous Lifecourse: Strengthening the Health and Well-Being of Native Youth*, continues the matrilineal line of healing, resistance and resilience, and can guide the investment in actions that strengthen Native women and girls leadership.

A LEGACY OF FEMALE POWER DISRUPTED

Native American women have long held roles of power and influence — including as clan matrons, warriors, medicine women, artisans — that are as diverse as the cultures from which they descend. There are common threads of Native women as culture-bearers, life givers, healers and leaders, and, in matrilineal First Nations, as owners of land and other resources.

European colonialism disrupted centuries of Native lifeways, especially through the separation of Native peoples from their families, tribes, cultures and land. This greatly impacted Native peoples' deeply connected way of living and destabilized women's roles and leadership in their communities, as a result. Additionally, Native women and girls were also enslaved and subjected to rape and torture, and European norms of subservient roles for women and girls were strictly enforced through forced assimilation, including in Indian Boarding Schools and missions.

These colonial practices still continue today. For instance, extractive industries — such as oil and coal — bring non-Native workers to work on pipelines and mines near Native communities, and women in these communities subsequently face exponentially higher levels of violence and sexually trafficking at the hands of workers in these “man camps.” This pervasive violence has been ignored and, until recently, implicitly condoned by federal policies that stripped tribes of their right to

prosecute non-Natives who perpetrated crimes on the reservation. Even with the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Tribal Law and Order Act, violence against Native women by non-Native men continues at a high rate, and thousands of Native women are considered murdered and missing in the United States and Canada.

Generations of colonialism and trauma have heightened the systemic challenges Native women and girls face: high rates of violence, poverty and suicide and low rates of culturally-appropriate health care and educational attainment and lower wages.

AT A GLANCE: THE STATE OF NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS TODAY

DEMOGRAPHICS

6.7M people identified as American Indian/Alaska Native in 2016, **3.6M** as AI/AN females.¹

HEALTH

33.3% of Native American women do not have health coverage.²

Native American women **lack access to emergency contraception**, which is “integral to improving women’s overall well-being and securing their reproductive rights.”²

VIOLENCE

MORE THAN 4 IN 5 Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime.³

MORE THAN 1 IN 3 Native women have experienced violence in the last year.³

Native American and Alaskan Native women are more than **2.5 TIMES more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted** than women in the United States in general.⁴

At least **70%** of the violence experienced by Native Americans are **committed by non-Natives**, a rate much higher than interracial violence experienced by white or Black people.⁴ **Homicide is the third leading cause of death for Indigenous women ages 10 to 24.**⁵

On some reservations, Native American women are **murdered at a rate 10 TIMES** the national average.⁶

Native girls ages 15-19 attempt suicide more often than boys (32% vs. 22%). Research shows that **each additional protective factor** (e.g. family involvement, safe neighborhoods, cultural immersion, resilience, etc.) **decreases the likelihood of a suicide attempt by 50 percent.**⁷

Native women and girls are disproportionately represented in the commercial sex trade. In a survey of four sites in the United States and Canada, **an average of 40% of the women involved in sex trafficking identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or First Nations.**⁷

5,712 total missing Native women cases reported to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) in the United States. However, the actual number is likely much higher, as cases of missing Native women are often under-reported and the data has never been officially collected.⁸

EDUCATION

In 2010, only **41%** of AI/AN female students had **completed the bachelor's degree that they commenced in 2004.**⁷

Only **15.5%** of Native American women hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.²

The number of American Indian/Alaska Native women enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide **increased 200% between 1976 and 2006**, and the number earning master's, doctoral, and professional degrees **increased by 400%.**⁷

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Native American women have the highest poverty rate at **28.1%.**²

Native American women have among the national lowest earnings at \$31,000 (compared to \$46,000 for Asian/Pacific Islander women, \$40,000 for white women and \$28,000 for Hispanic women).²

American Indian/Alaska Native women **earn less than 60 cents for every dollar earned by a white male.**⁷

Despite these challenges, American Indian/Alaska Native women-owned businesses grew by **108%** from 1997-2013.⁷

PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE CONTINUED THE LONG LINE OF TRADITIONAL FEMALE LEADERSHIP, DESPITE THE ONGOING LEGACY OF COLONIALISM.

They have fought on the front lines of resistance across time, issues and communities, and we, as a society, need to re-center Native women and girls in systemic change efforts to restore Native communities to full health and sustainability. As an example, in January 2017, Native Americans in Philanthropy joined forces with Advance Native Political Leadership, Native Voice Network, Native Voices Rising, National Indian Women's Resource Center, UltraViolet, The Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas, North American Region, Indigenous Environmental Network, and other key organizations to form Indigenous Women Rise (IWR), a collective that marched as part of the Women's March in Washington, DC and advocated for inclusion of Native priorities in the march platform. Since the march, IWR developed an organizing and policy advocacy plan to raise awareness on violence against the earth, elimination of violence against women, civic and political engagement, and health care access for all. NAP continues to promote this plan as a core tenet of our Native women and girls work. The Women's March also developed a book, **TOGETHER WE RISE**, that definitively chronicles the march. Indigenous Women Rise is one of three women-led grassroots organizations to benefit from the proceeds of the sales of this book, and is donating these funds to the **National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC)**, a Native non-profit working to address domestic violence and safety for Indigenous Women.

In our previous report, ***The Indigenous Lifecourse: Strengthening the Health and Well-Being of Native Youth***, Native scholars identified a set of seven key protective factors for the optimal development of Native youth, families and communities. Native women and girls — in their central roles in their families and communities — are key agents in reinforcing these protective factors to address the challenges they and their communities face.



CULTURAL CONNECTEDNESS Just as not all Indigenous youth are fully connected to their cultural identity and practices, relatively few Native programs have had an opportunity to fully ground their programming in cultural perspectives and such teachings as Original Instructions. Many have sought – not always successfully – to add Indigenous touches to programs imported from dominant sectors. Native youth programs are hungry to know what works, in terms of strength-based perspectives relative to culture and protective factors rather than deficits. Youth practitioners need space and support for learning, reflection and adaptation, as well as data collection and analysis. Culture (in all its forms – from “big C” Ceremony to “little C” cultural values) must be embedded in the ground floor of programming - not become an add-on.



FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS Many interventions target individual youth who may receive helpful services. However, youth go home to environments that may reinforce negative attitudes or behavior. Therefore, dual generation approaches, serving youth as well as parents/caregivers, are critical. The Fort Peck Tribe in Montana no longer refers to youth programs; instead, they are “family programs.” With the impact of trauma, many parents have not learned their child-rearing roles or responsibilities to teach cultural values. Individualist-oriented approaches seem to have less promise than do holistic, collectivist-oriented ones.



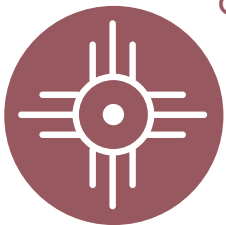
EXTENDED FAMILY, KINSHIP AND NETWORKS Native people are relational, and nurturing relationships is a required precursor to conducting business. Honoring relationships is the work. At home and work, relationships are part of an Indigenous ecosystem. When Native communities and organizations do function effectively, it is not uncommon for their stakeholders to act like extended family – even when they are unrelated by blood. Core cultural values (i.e., “family values”) such as responsibility and reciprocity guide behavior. The primacy of relationships in Native settings is similar to a youth development adage: youth don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.



YOUTH SELF-EFFICACY Generally speaking, Native youth are experiential, hands-on learners. They typically observe, try together with a teacher, try alone, reflect, and then adapt for next time. Youth need space and resources to explore and try – fancy tools, virtual spaces, arts and spoken word that can demonstrate their creativity and give them confidence to take more positive risks. All youth programs seek to increase the capacity of individual youth. However, too few have the necessary resources to deliver truly individualized opportunities that maximize development. Because taking positive risks and getting out of one’s comfort zone is learning, diverse programs seeking similar goals could make unusual linkages (e.g., outdoors adventure and youth entrepreneurship).



HEALTHY TRADITIONAL FOOD Good nutrition is vital for everyone. A growing number of Native youth initiatives are targeting healthy eating and drinking, and active living. Some entities have adopted healthy beverage policies. However, culture advocates say that while drinking more water or growing a garden is positive, it is insufficient. They maintain Native people also need to return to their Indigenous foods and plants traditions - rooted in tribal homelands - in order to be fully healthy. Encompassing more than physical wellness, these traditions also involve spirituality and practice of such values as feeding other people and caring for the land.



COMMUNITY CONTROL Ideas as well as institutions (e.g., tribal college and universities) that enjoy community ownership can thrive and become more sustainable. However, Native communities have a history of mandates by the U.S. Government, churches and funders about how to conduct their affairs. Such outside approaches have been adopted wholesale, and many if not most have failed to deliver positive outcomes. Tribes are working to reclaim lost homelands – due to broken treaties and to such government policies as land allotment – and to regain control of their natural resources.



SPIRITUALITY AND CEREMONIES Culture includes worldview and beliefs, but it also involves practice. The beliefs are expressed through Native language and daily practices (both simple daily lifeways and others more ritualistic in nature). Youth learn by doing, and passing on cultural knowledge to youth is challenging without the experience of active practice. In terms of healing and wellness, more state governments are providing medical reimbursement for some ceremonial practices in addressing substance abuse and mental health.

WE SURVEYED NEARLY 70 NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS AT THE 2017 WOMEN EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR INDIGENOUS NATIONS (WEWIN) annual conference to determine how they viewed the current state of their communities according to the protective factors (see Appendix: WEWIN 2017 Conference Full Survey Results). Respondents were asked to choose the number on a scale from one to seven that described how often the statements are true for them as an Indigenous Woman, youth or those in their community.

The numbers represent a different amount of time: **1=Never, 2=Very Rarely, 3=Rarely, 4=About Half the Time, 5=Frequently, 6=Very Frequently and 7=Always**. Across the questions, the women and girls consistently, on average, responded that the protective factors held true about half the time.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS	AVERAGE AMOUNT OF TIME
> 1. Are Native girls in your community developing a sense of connectedness that enable them to feel loved, secure, confident, valued, and empowered to "give back" to others?	> 4.04
> 2. Are there spaces for Native girls in your community to build a trusting relationship with positive, optimistic, mutually respectful peers who have similar values?	> 4.26
> 3a. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides spiritual/cultural support?	> 4.71
> 3b. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who promotes high expectations?	> 4.52
> 3c. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides informational support?	> 4.57
> 4a. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about one's culture?	> 4.61
> 4b. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about sexual behavior, responsibility, choices and consequences?	> 4.00

> 4c. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about gaining independence from parents and other adults while maintaining strong connections with them?	> 4.00
> 5. Are Native women understanding one's rights on accessing eligible services?	> 4.04
> 6. Are Native girls understanding one's rights in accessing eligible services?	> 3.96
> 7. Are Native women able to identify, find, and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves, as well as specialized services?	> 4.45
> 8. Are Native women and girls in your community accessing Native ancestral diets and practicing traditional food habits?	> 3.62
> 9. Are Native women engaged in opportunities to develop sustainable economies on their traditional land and/or use of natural resources?	> 3.67
> 10. Are Native women understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?	> 3.84
> 11. Are Native girls understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?	> 3.63

The respondents also ranked key priorities for Native girls, with 1 being the highest and 4 the lowest.

- 1. Sense of responsibility, accountability and purpose.**
- 2. Peer and family relations.**
- 3. Participation in traditional culture.**
- 4. Community engagement/leadership development.**

The rankings demonstrate how Native women and girls will be central in strengthening the protective factors and fully restoring Native lifeways, including more equitable gender roles and female leadership.

SUPPORTING RESILIENCY AND HEALING: PROFILES IN INVESTING IN NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

PHILANTHROPY CAN SUPPORT NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THIS WORK BY INVESTING IN THEIR LEADERSHIP, TRUSTING THEIR AUTHORITY AND RESPECTING THEIR WAYS OF WORKING.

Native- and non-Native-led grantmakers can forge deep partnerships with Native women and girls through many means, and Seventh Generation Fund, Na’ah Illahee Fund and NoVo Foundation provide some examples.

SEVENTH GENERATION FUND: THRIVING WOMEN’S INITIATIVE

Based on an interview with Chisa Oros Peters (ZunilYoeme), Project Manager

Founded in 1977, the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples is dedicated to promoting Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and the sovereignty of Native nations. They have long recognized the critical need at the Native grassroots community level for access to resources, technical assistance and training to address an overall need for healthy and sustainable environments. The Fund's Thriving Women's Initiative explores work that builds the identity and expresses the deep rooted strength of Indigenous women. It supports Native women led work that nurtures life, breaks down gender oppression, responds to and prevents violence, and recognizes that reproductive health is connected with the vitality of Mother Earth.

HOW THE FUND SUPPORTS NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

For this initiative, Seventh Generation Fund pools funds from individual and institutional supporters (including NoVo Foundation, profiled below) to make general operating grants to Native organizations and projects that are majority women-led, -directed and -impacted. A committee of people in executive and program staff — including those from the second generation of Native activists as well as with specific geographic expertise that matches the organizations' — make decisions. Sometimes grantees just need a small grant to rent a building, host events or cover insurance: some are one-time grantees, while others are ongoing grantees — “we have to be flexible if we want to serve the people.” Since 2014, they have awarded \$950,000 in direct grants. Seventh Generation also supports grantees through ongoing capacity-building and networking sessions, all of which also contributes to ongoing relationship building between the Fund and their grantees. “Patriarchy can be isolating, so this can be empowering.”

CORE BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES

“We are rich in culture, ceremonies, lifeways and mindset.”

In Native worldview, the natural world is our common mother or common grandmother, and it has a right to be free of exploitation, industrial extraction, etc. The Initiative’s connection between Native women and girls and earth, then, achieves “simultaneous impact” by rooting support in Native traditions of collectivism and actualization. Seventh Generation Fund has always focused on Native women and girls on the frontline of the work, especially in breaking down colonial gender barriers and promoting strategies for healing from ongoing violence. Seventh Generation seeks to uplift the “strong hearts and minds of Native women and girls” and intergenerational strengths in all cultures. Seventh Generation has also always had donors and funders who have wanted to direct funds to support women. They named the Thriving Women’s Initiative in the last few years in order to make the work more visible and understandable to mainstream philanthropy. The Initiative encompasses the needs of not just mainstream man and woman identities, but recognizes the spectrum of identities-masculine to feminine.

Seventh Generation staff — themselves majority Native and women — are deeply committed to being in the communities they serve. They have in-depth conversations with applicants and generally always conduct site visits and spend time in the communities — “we never turn down an invitation to be in the community.” Cultivating ongoing relationships with their grantees is central to their work and is especially meaningful for some of their grantees who do not have a great relationship with philanthropy for any number of reasons, including the colonial nature of institutionalized philanthropy. It is “very powerful for grantees to receive funding from people who can also sit next to them in the lodge.”

Seventh Generation Fund is exploring ways to measure and highlight grantee success holistically and in terms of resilience so that impact is “not just a numbers game.” They are working with their grantees, Dr. Michael Yellowbird, a Native scholar (who co-authored Native Americans in Philanthropy’s Indigenous Lifecourse report and co-designed the protective factors framework), and Victoria Gemmill, filmmaker and activist, to document the work in the communities.

LESSONS FOR FUNDERS

The Initiative is fully immersed in community, a result of being Native women-led and building on 40 years of work and relationships. It is unique, but they have key lessons to share with funders who are interested in exploring or deepening work with Native women and girls:

- > **Be humble and human with people.**
- > **Understand the long history and context of the “white savior” complex and how it shapes the philanthropic industrial complex.**
- > **Have compassion and patience; there are many factors at play in people’s lives. People are struggling mind, body and spirit.**
- > **Although there are struggles, resiliency runs deep in all Indigenous communities, or else we would not exist and our peoples would not be thriving as we are.**

- **Never assume disappearance of ceremony or culture. Instead, understand the dynamics of dormancy and cultural evolution as the needs and seasons of the Earth and peoples change.**

NA’AH ILLAHEE FUND

Based on an interview with Susan Balbas (Cherokee/Yaqui), Co-Founder and Executive Director

Na'ah Illahee Fund (Mother Earth in the Chinook language), was established in 2005 as Tierra Madre Fund with funding from an individual philanthropic leader who shared the vision of powerful Native female-centered activism and leadership. Today, they are a community of teachers, partners, staff and board members who work with numerous small organizations across the Pacific Northwest to build up the leadership of Native women and girls and their connections within Native communities and cultures. Na’ah Illahee engages women of all ages to revitalize traditional Native knowledge, build their leadership and capacity to develop strong identities through Indigenous knowledge.

HOW THEY SUPPORT NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

Na’ah Illahee Fund supports Native women-led organizations and projects with fiscal sponsorship and grants from their multicultural Ah-da-ne-hi: Indigenous Women’s Giving Circle (up to \$5,000 each to 5-10 Northwest Native women-led community initiatives) and through discretionary grants throughout the year. They support a core group of grassroots grantees, as well as some one-time projects, such as ceremonies or one-year programs. Na’ah Illahee grantee-partners are diverse. One is a long-time grantee, a federally un-recognized tribe focusing on language preservation, economic empowerment, amplifying voices of lineal descendents and tribal governance. Na’ah Illahee is starting a community development corporation with them, first raising funds to buy land. Another is the Tlingit Haida Youth Group, affiliated with the Alaska Native Corporation. Na’ah Illahee supports them in building capacity and writing grants for their summer youth eco-cultural activities.

Their grantees are a network, and, with the recent addition of more staff, the Fund will do more convenings. They also build the capacity of their grantees, supporting strategic planning and development, preparing them to apply for funding from other sources. For instance, they will be doing an off-site event with the Women Donors Network to support them in learning from Na’ah Illahee’s grantees.

Na’ah Illahee Fund also provides youth training and environmental justice programming — Gen 7, Ya-howt: Indigenous Leaders for a Sustainable World and Native Girls Code — that helps advance sustainable indigenous cultures and collective capacities. They are launching into Just Transition work: returning from a fossil fuel economy to regenerative economies by supporting communities getting into clean energy, food policies, etc.

CORE BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES

“We support them in their choices.”

Na’ah Illahee believes that Native women are at the heart of Indigenous communities and that the vision, the initiatives and perseverance of Indigenous women should be supported with resources. They seek transformative change at the community level by supporting Indigenous women’s traditional models of leadership and organizing. Na’ah Illahee Fund believes that stronger Indigenous women leaders can determine their own priorities for the future and can protect our Mother Earth more effectively. They define women and girls inclusively as all female-identified people in their work and programming, including two spirit Native peoples and trans women.

Na’ah Illahee Fund takes a holistic approach to supporting the Northwest Native community. Soon after starting as a funder and resource to Native women and girls’ projects and organizations, they quickly realized that many of the organizations they wanted to support were too small and too new to receive funding and needed other support before they reached a stage where they are ready to apply for grants. Thus, they expanded our programming areas to support the leadership of Native women and girls and strengthen their connections within Native communities and cultures and continue to respond to organization- and community-defined priorities.

LESSONS FOR FUNDERS

Na’ah Illahee Fund is Native women-led and supported by Northwest-based individual and institutional supporters. They have developed a holistic partnership model with their grantees and projects, and from that experience they have key lessons to share with funders:

- > **Understand that individual Native people still operate from a place of value and protocol that is very different from the mainstream.**
- > **We need our own space to continue our healing. We need safe spaces for Native people to talk about their vision; spaces in which they don’t need to explain because everyone understands. It can be tiring to code switch or train people how to be an ally.**
- > **Understand that the 501(c)(3) nonprofit model doesn’t work for everyone — it’s a lot of work to maintain, which is why Na’ah Illahee provides fiscal sponsorship.**
- > **Value people’s time when considering and justifying grants. Gas money can support women getting together, but maybe they need a dedicated person for the project. Susan, herself, had to work other jobs when funding didn’t allow for a full-time director; she paid for the Fund with her own time, labor and personal contributions.**

NOVO FOUNDATION

Based on an interview with Hester Dillon (Cherokee Nation), Program Officer for Indigenous Communities

NoVo Foundation is dedicated to building a more just and balanced world. Founded in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, NoVo has become one of the largest private foundations in the world to support initiatives focused explicitly on girls and women, including a dedicated focus on ending violence against girls and women and supporting adolescent girls. NoVo's deeply interconnected work also includes a focus on advancing social and emotional learning, supporting Indigenous communities and promoting thriving local communities.

HOW THEY SUPPORT NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

NoVo Foundation seeks to help restore and strengthen Indigenous knowledge and life-ways as potentially transformative in addressing some of the world's—and similarly, some of Indigenous communities'—most pressing challenges. They provide grants to organizations across five interrelated focus areas in their Indigenous Communities Initiative: Violence Against Girls, Women and the Earth, Leadership of Indigenous Women and Girls, Indigenous Cultural Expression, Indigenous Education, and Healing from Historical Trauma and Oppression. As a foundation with a small staff, NoVo primarily makes grants by invitation. Occasionally, however, it invites Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) through its individual initiative areas. In May 2016, NoVo's Indigenous Communities initiative opened such a process, which ran through December 2016. This LOI was a way for NoVo to introduce itself to Indigenous communities, as well as a way for those working in communities to tell NoVo about their work and what needs to happen. In the last three years, the Indigenous Communities portfolio has grown, especially with organizations that are led and/or predominantly staffed by Native women. Also, in 2017, through its Advancing Adolescent Girls Rights' initiative, NoVo launched a \$90 million initiative to support young women and girls of color in the United States, which includes a focus on Native women and girls.

CORE BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES

“Women have been a strong resource for our communities.”

NoVo's support for girls and women lies at the core of all its work. In their Indigenous Communities Initiative, NoVo Foundation looks to Indigenous communities themselves to determine their own priorities for the future. They center Indigenous leaders, particularly women, in their analysis and as the leaders of their strategy. Additionally, as they begin their five-year strategic planning process (NoVo-wide and Initiatives), they plan to focus on how they can be of even more service to Indigenous communities. Furthermore, NoVo gives general operating support grants to give their grantees the room to be creative and pursue things they otherwise might not be able to.

NoVo Foundation's approach to measuring impact also reflects a centering of the communities as experts. They deeply trust communities as the best experts of meaningful measurement and recognize that their grantees are working on long-term transformations, such as the revitalization of Native food lifeways and languages, that require trust and relationship building over time.



NoVo Foundation tries to leverage their visibility and influence as a funder to spotlight community priorities. Their support of Native women and girls has become an “call to action” for other funders, organizations and projects, creating a powerful multiplier effect that is critical to supporting Native communities that are too often ignored and underfunded.

LESSONS FOR FUNDERS

NoVo Foundation tries to disrupt models of philanthropy that create a mentality of scarcity within and competition amongst communities. They center Native women and girls throughout their processes, and have lessons to share with other funders:

- > **Relationships are the core of the work. Native people lack visibility and are stereotyped because of a lack of relationships; non-Native people hold onto ideas that Native people are either taken care of by the federal government or gaming. Through relationships you will learn the landscape.**
- > **Be willing to build and navigate new relationships.**
- > **Connect with other people who can support building those relationships.**
- > **Understand that the pace and way in which work happens in Native communities is not linear. Get acquainted and be accepting – try to embrace different ways of working.**
- > **Don't underestimate flexibility; multi-year, general operating support is incredibly helpful. People wear multiple hats, so fundraising from year-to-year is tiring. Multi-year support encourages creativity and innovation.**

OTHER WAYS TO PARTNER WITH NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS

Culturally- and community-centered philanthropy depends on deep partnerships that require investments of time, trust and financial resources. Funders can build and expand partnerships with Native women and girls in a number of ways:

- **LEARN more about the true history, diverse cultures, worldview and priorities of Native women and girls. Attend their events, read their stories and talk to them.**
- **INVITE Native women and girls into influential spaces to tell their stories, advocate for their issues and communities and make decisions. Bring them onto foundation boards, advisory committees and leadership teams.**
- **INVEST in Native women and girls leadership, organizations, businesses and priorities. Support them in defining what change they want to see and help them build on the successes and innovations they have already generated.**
- **JOIN a network of influencers who raise awareness of who Native women and girls are and what they stand for with a broader audience. Connect with them to learn how you share values, a movement vision for change, and an urgency to make things better now.**

While the legacy of violence against women continues to be prevalent, mainstream media has not admitted their part in continuing this legacy by capitalizing on stereotypes and propaganda. To those who have worked in advocacy spaces, it is clear the dehumanization of Indigenous women and Native Americans has contributed the epidemics of violence, missing and murdered indigenous women, and suicide. It is our hope that funders acknowledge this history by uplifting and centering the experiences of Indigenous Peoples as fundamental — especially in the current movement era — as a commitment to recognition, reconciliation and remembrance. We believe these epidemics affecting the most vulnerable peoples will continue if the narrative of Manifest Destiny continues in our educational spaces. Philanthropy has the power to disrupt and course correct for healing and justice.

END NOTES

1. U.S. Census Bureau. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race Alone or in Combination, and Hispanic Origin for the United States and States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Accessed on May 18, 2018 factfinder.census.gov.

2. Status of Women in the States, 2015. Spotlight on Women of Color. Accessed on May 18, 2018 statusofwomendata.org/women-of-color.

3. Rosay, Andre B. May 2016. Violence against Native American Indian and Alaska Native women and men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Department of Justice National Institute of Justice.

4. Futures Without Violence. The Facts on Violence Against American Indian/Alaskan Native Women. Accessed on May 18, 2018 www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Violence%20Against%20AI%20AN%20Women%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, American Indian/Alaska Native Females - United States, 2013. Accessed on May 18, 2018.

www.cdc.gov/women/lcod/2013/WomenAIAN_2013.pdf.

6. Perrelli, T., July 14, 2011. Statement of Associate Attorney General Perrelli before the Committee on Indian Affairs on Violence Against Native American Women [citing a National Institute of Justice - funded analysis of death certificates]. Accessed on May 18, 2018 www.justice.gov/iso/opa/asg/speeches/2011/asg-speech-110714.html.

7. National Congress of American Indians, May 2015. A Spotlight on Native Women and Girls. Accessed on May 18, 2018

www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/A_Spotlight_on_Native_Women_-_Girls.pdf.

8. National Crime Information Center, 2016.

APPENDIX: WEWIN 2017 CONFERENCE FULL SURVEY RESULTS

WOMEN EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR INDIGENOUS NATIONS (WEWIN)

WEWIN MISSION: To strengthen and sustain tribal cultures for the benefit and destiny of the children; To educate about tribal cultures, the history of native people, the inherent rights we exercise for the good of our people and others, and of current issues that affect our well being; To promote honest dignified tribal leadership who reflect pride for those we represent; To support and encourage tribal leadership; To install a balance between service and solitude and between fulfilling responsibilities and devotion to loved ones; To express encouragement, understanding, and joy to others dedicated to following the guidance of our creator and serving our communities as role models.

WEWIN hosts an annual conference. Native Americans in Philanthropy surveyed 66 participants at the 2017 conference held July-August in Albuquerque, New Mexico. All of the total survey respondents identified as Indigenous women.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

FEDERALLY-RECOGNIZED TRIBAL AFFILIATION

FEDERAL RECOGNITION	#	%
> Yes	> 61	> 98.4%
> No	> 1	> 1.6%
> No Answer	> 4	> -

32 TRIBAL AFFILIATIONS

CURRENT LOCATION	#	%
> Urban	> 18	> 28.1%
> Rural (reservation)	> 46	> 71.9%
> No Answer	> 2	> -

33 CITIES IN 12 STATES AND 1 CANADIAN PROVINCE

REGIONS	#	%
> Canada	> 1	> 1.8%
> Northwest	> 7	> 12.3%
> Midwest	> 14	> 24.6%
> Northeast	> 0	> 0.0%
> Northern California	> 2	> 3.5%
> Southern California	> 8	> 14.0%
> Southwest	> 20	> 35.1%
> Central	> 4	> 7.0%
> Southeast	> 1	> 1.8%

AGE	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		2016 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY*
	#	%	%
> Ages 10-19	> 4	> 6.3%	> 18.2%
> Ages 20-29	> 4	> 6.3%	> 17.9%
> Ages 30-44	> 17	> 25.6%	> 22.6%
> Ages 45-54	> 15	> 23.4%	> 15.0%
> Ages 55-64	> 13	> 20.3%	> 13.7%
> Ages 65-74	> 5	> 7.8%	> 7.9%
> Ages 75-84	> 3	> 4.7%	> 3.4%
> Ages 85 and older	> 0	> 0.0%	> 1.3%
> No Answer	> 3	> -	> -

* 1-Year Estimates - American Indian and Alaska Native only, Females only. % only for ages 10 and above.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		2016 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY**
	#	%	1.8%
> Elementary or junior high school	> 2+	> 3.1%	> 7.0%
> Some high school	> 3++	> 4.7%	> 11.3%
> High school diploma or GED	> 5	> 7.8%	> 29.4%
> Trade/vocational	> 2	> 3.1%	> Not tracked
> Training some college	> 14	> 21.9%	> 26.2%
> 2-year college degree (Associate's)	> 10	> 15.7%	> 10.2%
> 4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	> 19	> 26.7%	> 10.3%
> Master's degree	> 6	> 9.4%	> 5.5%
> PhD or other advanced degree	> 3	> 4.7%	> 5.5%
> No Answer	> 3	> -	> -

** 1-Year Estimates - American Indian and Alaska Native only, Females only, 25 Years and Over

+ One of respondents was a 13-year-old

++ Two of respondents were 17-year-olds

WORK WITH OR FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	#	%
> Yes	> 46	> 75.4%
> No	> 15	> 24.6%
> No Answer	> 5	> -

ORGANIZATION (BY TYPE)	#	%***
> Non-Profit	> 10	> 20.4%
> Tribal Government	> 35	> 71.4%
> Governmental	> 1	> 2.0%
> Private	> 6	> 12.2%
> No Answer	> 17	> -

*** Percentages do not add up to 100%; some respondents made multiple choices.

MEASURING KEY PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN SEVEN AREAS

Respondents were asked to circle the number that describes how often the statements are true for them as an Indigenous Woman, youth or those in their community. The numbers represent a scale from 1 to 7 where each of the numbers represents a different amount of time: **1=Never, 2=Very Rarely, 3=Rarely, 4>About Half the Time, 5=Frequently, 6=Very Frequently and 7=Always.**

PROTECTIVE FACTORS: CULTURAL CONNECTION AND CONNECTEDNESS, FAMILY CONNECTEDNESS, COMMUNITY CONTROL, SPIRITUALITY AND CEREMONIES, EXTENDED KIN BONDS AND NETWORKS, HEALTHY TRADITIONAL FOOD, AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP	AVERAGE AMOUNT OF TIME (4 = TRUE HALF THE TIME)
> 1. Are Native girls in your community developing a sense of connectedness that enable them to feel loved, secure, confident, valued, and empowered to "give back" to others?	> 4.04
> 2. Are there spaces for Native girls in your community to build a trusting relationship with positive, optimistic, mutually respectful peers who have similar values?	> 4.26
> 3a. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides spiritual/cultural support?	> 4.71
> 3b. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who promotes high expectations?	> 4.52
> 3c. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides informational support?	> 4.57
> 4a. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about one's culture?	> 4.61
> 4b. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about sexual behavior, responsibility, choices and consequences?	> 4.00

> 4c. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about gaining independence from parents and other adults while maintaining strong connections with them?	> 4.00
> 5. Are Native women understanding one's rights on accessing eligible services?	> 4.04
> 6. Are Native girls understanding one's rights in accessing eligible services?	> 3.96
> 7. Are Native women able to identify, find, and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves, as well as specialized services?	> 4.45
> 8. Are Native women and girls in your community accessing Native ancestral diets and practicing traditional food habits?	> 3.62
> 9. Are Native women engaged in opportunities to develop sustainable economies on their traditional land and/or use of natural resources?	> 3.67
> 10. Are Native women understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?	> 3.84
> 11. Are Native girls understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?	> 3.63

SCALES OF EACH PROTECTIVE FACTOR

> 1. Are Native girls in your community developing a sense of connectedness that enable them to feel loved, secure, confident, valued, and empowered to "give back" to others?								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	4	14	24	11	2	3	2
%	0.0%	6.3%	31.9%	37.5%	17.2%	3.1%	4.7%	-
AVERAGE = 4.04								

NOTE: One respondent answered 4 and 5, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 4.5 in calculating the average.

> 2. Are there spaces for Native girls in your community to build a trusting relationship with positive, optimistic, mutually respectful peers who have similar values?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	2	6	10	18	15	7	5	2
%	3.1%	9.4%	15.6%	28.1%	23.4%	10.9%	7.8%	-

AVERAGE = 4.26

NOTE: One respondent answered 4 and 5, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 4.5 in calculating the average.

> 3a. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides spiritual/cultural support?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	5	6	18	18	5	11	2
%	0.0%	7.8%	9.4%	28.1%	28.1%	7.8%	17.2%	-

AVERAGE = 4.71

NOTE: One respondent answered 4 and 5, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 4.5 in calculating the average.

> 3b. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who promotes high expectations?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	5	6	15	14	7	5	13
%	0.0%	9.4%	11.3%	28.3%	26.4%	13.2%	9.4%	-

AVERAGE = 4.52

NOTE: One respondent answered 4 and 5, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 4.5 in calculating the average.

> 3c. Are there opportunities for Native girls to build a trusting relationship with at least one caring and competent adult who provides informational support?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	5	3	16	17	5	5	15
%	0.0%	9.8%	5.9%	31.4%	33.3%	9.8%	9.8%	-

AVERAGE = 4.57

NOTE: One respondent answered 4 and 5, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 4.5 in calculating the average.

> 4a. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about sexual behavior, responsibility, choices and consequences?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	1	7	10	22	10	4	4	6
%	1.7%	11.7%	16.7%	36.7%	16.7%	6.7%	6.7%	-

AVERAGE = 4.00

NOTE: One respondent answered 1 and 2, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 1.5 in calculating the average.

> 4b. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about one's culture?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	5	4	20	18	8	7	3
%	0.0%	7.9%	6.3%	31.7%	28.6%	12.7%	11.1%	-

AVERAGE = 4.61

NOTE: One respondent answered 1 and 2, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 1.5 in calculating the average. Another respondent answered 3 and 4, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as 3.5 in calculating the average.

> 4c. Are Native girls/youth seeking, acquiring, and using accurate information about gaining independence from parents and other adults while maintaining strong connections with them?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	0	5	15	28	10	3	3	2
%	0.0%	7.8%	23.4%	43.8%	15.6%	4.7%	4.7%	-

AVERAGE = 4.00

> 5. Are Native women understanding one's rights on accessing eligible services?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	2	5	8	31	13	3	2	1
%	3.1%	7.7%	12.3%	47.7%	20.0%	4.6%	3.1%	-

AVERAGE = 4.04

NOTE: One respondent answered 5 and 6, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 5.5 in calculating the average.

> 6. Are Native girls understanding one's rights on accessing eligible services?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	1	6	14	27	9	5	2	1
%	1.5%	9.2%	21.5%	41.5%	13.8%	7.7%	3.1%	-

AVERAGE = 3.96

NOTE: One respondent answered 5 and 6, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 5.5 in calculating the average.

> 7. Are Native women able to identify, find, and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves, as well as specialized services?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	1	3	10	22	10	11	5	2
%	1.6%	4.7%	15.6%	34.4%	15.6%	17.2%	7.8%	-

AVERAGE = 4.45

NOTE: One respondent answered 3 and 4, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 3.5 in calculating the average.

> 8. Are Native women and girls in your community accessing Native ancestral diets and practicing traditional food habits?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	2	12	28	9	7	7	3	1
%	3.1%	18.5%	43.1%	13.8%	10.8%	10.8%	4.6%	-

AVERAGE = 3.62

> 9. Are Native women engaged in opportunities to develop sustainable economies on their traditional land and/or use of natural resources?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	2	13	17	15	10	3	4	2
%	3.1%	20.3%	26.6%	23.4%	15.6%	4.7%	6.3%	-

AVERAGE = 3.67

> 10. Are Native women understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	4	5	19	16	12	4	3	2
%	6.3%	7.8%	29.7%	25.0%	18.8%	6.3%	4.7%	-

AVERAGE = 3.84

NOTE: One respondent answered 5 and 6, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 5.5 in calculating the average.

> 11. Are Native girls understanding one's rights to sovereignty and self-determination?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	No Answer
#	4	7	20	18	9	2	3	1
%	6.2%	10.8%	31.3%	27.7%	13.8%	3.1%	4.6%	-

AVERAGE = 3.63

NOTE: One respondent answered 5 and 6, which is not counted in the responses above and was tabulated as a 5.5 in calculating the average.

RANKING OF KEY PRIORITIES FOR NATIVE GIRLS

Respondents were asked to identify key priorities for Native girls, then rank them from 1 to 4 by level of importance: 1 being the highest of importance and 4 being the least. Respondents were provided a space to identify additional key priorities; no additional were suggested. Seventeen respondents did not answer or gave invalid answers (e.g., ranking all of the key priorities with the same number).

COLLECTIVE RANKING

1. **Sense of responsibility, accountability and purpose.**
2. **Peer and family relations.**
3. **Participation in traditional culture.**
4. **Community engagement/leadership development.**

RANKINGS OF EACH KEY PRIORITY

SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PURPOSE		
RANKING	#	%
> 1	> 16	> 32.7%
> 2	> 15	> 30.6%
> 3	> 10	> 20.4%
> 4	> 8	> 16.3%

PEER AND FAMILY RELATIONS		
RANKING	#	%
> 1	> 16	> 32.7%
> 2	> 20	> 40.8%
> 3	> 8	> 16.3%
> 4	> 5	> 10.2%

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

RANKING	#	%
> 1	> 2	> 4.1%
> 2	> 4	> 8.2%
> 3	> 13	> 26.5%
> 4	> 30	> 61.2%

PARTICIPATION IN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

RANKING	#	%
> 1	> 15	> 30.6%
> 2	> 10	> 20.4%
> 3	> 18	> 36.7%
> 4	> 6	> 12.2%



NATIVE AMERICANS
IN PHILANTHROPY

WEB nativephilanthropy.org
NativeVoicesRising.org

TWITTER [@nativegiving](https://twitter.com/nativegiving)
FACEBOOK [NativeAmericansPhilanthropy](https://www.facebook.com/NativeAmericansPhilanthropy)