

# Indigenous Centered

IMPROVING EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOR NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES  
WITH COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS



NATIVE AMERICANS  
IN PHILANTHROPY

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## INTRODUCTION

This report examines the current relationship community foundations have with Native Americans across the United States while also highlighting ways in which the community foundation field can improve their accountability to Native communities.

The primary goals of this project were to:

1. center the voices of Indigenous leaders and provide them a platform for candid and honest guidance to community foundations and their funders.
2. obtain a deeper understanding of what equity and accountability means within philanthropy and particularly between community foundations and tribal communities.
3. design a framework that will offer recommendations in building stronger partnerships between community foundations and tribal entities.

An environmental scan was used as a method for achieving these goals along with the Five R's of Indigenous philanthropy, a paradigm constructed by the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples. Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) reached out to key Indigenous leaders in the philanthropic sector to determine a set of survey questions that were shared with several community foundations across the United States. Interview questions and survey questions included the goals mentioned above while also centering the Five R's of Indigenous philanthropy: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships, and Redistribution.

Findings from the listening and learning sessions and the community foundations survey were then used to develop a series of recommendations for improving relationships between community foundations and Native communities.



## CONTEXT

According to the Council on Foundations, community foundations are tax-exempt charitable organizations that support the needs of the geographic locations where they are based.<sup>[1]</sup> Community foundations also play a key role in identifying and solving community issues. For example, in 2017, they gave an estimated \$5.48 billion to a variety of nonprofit activities in fields that included the arts and education, health and human services, environmental impact, and disaster relief.



In relation to Native communities, approximately 0.04% of funding goes to Indigenous Peoples and according to a 2018 publication by First Nations Development Institute; on average, 0.15% of community foundation funding goes to Native American organizations and causes annually.<sup>[2]</sup>

Furthermore, First Nations Development Institute also surveyed community foundation total giving in ten states and discovered that community foundations do give grants to many Native American causes and programs amounting to a total of \$5,875,500 over a three-year period, averaging about \$1.8 million per year within ten states.<sup>[3]</sup> However, when taking into consideration the Indigenous population among these ten states “the dollar amount of grants given to Native American organizations and causes is much lower than might be expected given Native American population size and levels of need.”<sup>[4]</sup>

In evaluating the current amount of community foundation funding that gives to Native American causes and issues across the so-called United States, 815 grants were given to organizations exclusively benefitting Native American communities over a ten-year period (2014-2023) amounting to a total of \$20.9 million to approximately 463 organizations, which is only 15% of total funding that goes specifically to Native American communities and causes.<sup>[5]</sup> Some community foundations have also given more grant dollars to organizations than others. For example, the Minneapolis Foundation [108 grants], the Seattle Foundation [42 grants], and the Oregon Community Foundation [98 grants] have given the most amount of funding to various organizations that support Native American communities and causes across the so-called United States.<sup>[6]</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

NAP crafted a three-stage approach to the environmental scan:




### STAGE ONE: LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING

Stage one consisted of a review of existing content and literature formulated by NAP, which included reviewing Tribal Nations Initiative (TNI) listening sessions with tribal leaders and previous meetings with the Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals working group. Both are NAP programs. This stage also included an external landscape analysis of related research conducted by other organizations.



### STAGE TWO: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Stage two focused on gathering input from tribal leaders and community foundations. Tools included interviews with key Indigenous leaders from Native organizations, tribal communities, and Native leaders within the community foundation field. During this stage, we utilized recommendations from our team at NAP to create a potential list of interviewees that represented NAP's networks of Indigenous leadership: Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals (IPP) Working Group, Tribal Nations Initiative, Native Youth Grantmakers, Native nonprofit leaders, and Native executive and board leaders in philanthropy.



A series of questions were drafted that consisted of various thematic elements, from the amount of grant dollars exclusively benefitting Native communities and causes to the types of programming that benefits Native organizations, tribal communities, etc. Approximately nine interview questions were generated [Appendix A]. Twelve Indigenous leaders were contacted through email and six confirmed. The interview process took approximately one month. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for thematic elements that were then used to develop an online survey. A total of nineteen questions [Appendix B] were generated and sent out to 154 community foundations at which 26 responded. Community Foundations were selected based on data from NAP's "Investing in Native Communities" portal, in which we identified community foundations who have supported Native issues and causes. The questions ranged from understanding their values and mission as an organization to their programming strategies and community engagement efforts. Responses from the interview questions and the online survey were then used in stage three of this project.

### **STAGE THREE: COMPILING AND DISSEMINATION**

Using what we learned from stage one and two, stage three identified key opportunities and actions for community foundations to consider in improving their accountability to Native communities, as well as leverage opportunities in the sector for further funding of these efforts. All individuals who participated in stage one and two of the project received a final copy of the report, which included all Indigenous leaders interviewed and all community foundations who responded to the online survey.



## OUTCOMES

Findings for this project were two-fold with initial findings consisting of four themes derived from interviews with six Indigenous leaders. The themes were then used to develop the community foundation survey, which was sent to community foundations and made up the second portion of our findings. Both phases were then used to generate our recommendations for future engagement. Below is a summary of our key findings from the interviews:



### FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH INDIGENOUS LEADERS

#### Long-Term Partnerships

- Building long term partnerships between community foundations and Native communities that go beyond investing in Native communities but also supporting cultural traditions and working towards sustainable partnerships.
- Providing funders with tools that go beyond funding such as facilitating conversations, offering training, engaging Native peoples as thought leaders, creating opportunities for collaboration, etc. Many of the Indigenous leaders we interviewed suggested that foundations take the time to learn more about the communities they serve through workshops, seminars, and other learning opportunities that focus on the history and issues of Indigenous people while also acknowledging that Native people are sovereign nations with strength, abilities, and ingenuities.





## Strengthening Community Capacity

- Acknowledging that Native peoples know their communities better than anyone else and supporting initiatives to improve their ability to serve the needs of their communities which may include sustaining programs, services, and supports; funding operational costs often overlooked; environmental changes, etc.
- Stronger foundation-grantee relationships. There is a need for more initiatives by foundations to build stronger relationships with grantees that are built on the emphasis of trust, respect, and honesty. Examples by interviewees included: visiting and learning from Native-led organizations and tribal communities and taking part in programs and events held by their grantees.

## Strengthening Indigenous Representation



- There is a significant lack of Indigenous representation within the sector. According to the 2022 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals (DAPP) report released by Change Philanthropy, approximately “3.4% of people in philanthropy identify either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with some other racial or ethnic identity.”<sup>[7]</sup> Indigenous leaders we interviewed for this project also emphasized the lack of Indigenous representation in philanthropy and its impact on building relationships with communities. Without Indigenous representation in the field, Indigenous communities will continue to be excluded or invisible to the sector. Therefore, greater action is needed on Indigenous representation within the field of philanthropy particularly among leadership and board positions.
- Foundation boards need to be more reflective of the communities they support while also including more Indigenous voices in the decision-making and strategic efforts of organizations. Some of the Indigenous leaders also emphasized the need for organizations to “look from within” and “take inventory” of who they are funding and if that “inventory” includes Indigenous communities and organizations.



## Improving Reporting and Representation in Data

- In the philanthropy field, data is an asset and is seen as “the fuel of innovation and social change.”<sup>[8]</sup> However, data reporting often excludes Indigenous communities or provides misinformation that may be detrimental to Indigenous people. Indigenous leaders we interviewed spoke about the lack of data on Indigenous-led organizations and the grant dollars that are supposedly funding these Indigenous communities.



Based on the survey responses from 26 organizations, we present the following research findings.

### Representation in the Community Foundation Field



Multiple questions in the survey centered Indigenous representation amongst the staff and leadership of community foundations, while other questions centered Indigenous representation within programming and the mission and vision of the organization. Survey results determined that 38% of organizations outlined support for tribal communities, Native organizations, and other tribal entities in their values, vision, and mission.

52% do not outline support for Indigenous peoples.

Respondents who currently do not outline support for Native Communities and causes were prompted to provide additional comment to their response; many foundations shared that they plan to include Indigenous communities in their strategic plans while others have shared that they do not “specify any particular identity group” in their strategic plans but do believe in a mission that centers equity and inclusivity.



### Indigenous Representation Within Community Foundation Staff and Leadership

43% of organizations indicated they have had Indigenous representation on their board.

26% have had no Indigenous representation on their board.

19% indicated they once had Indigenous presence on the board but currently do not.

14% have indicated they currently have Indigenous representation on staff.

71% have indicated they currently do not have Indigenous representation on staff.

14% have indicated they once had Indigenous representation on staff but currently do not.

In addition to the data shared above, survey respondents were also prompted to answer the following question:

*Does your organization have values, a vision, or a mission that outlines support for tribal communities, Native organizations, and Indigenous people within communities of impact?*

Respondents indirectly answered this question by sharing former and current initiatives they implemented through organizational programming. Community Foundations shared their commitment to tribal communities through initiatives such as: “Indigenous sovereignty organizing,” children and family service programs, and “gifts of real property” grants. For example, two foundations indicated that they offered childcare services that benefited surrounding tribal communities through early childhood education systems, which would allow children to have full time access to early childhood education opportunities. Although, the foundation website does not explicitly indicate whether the service directly benefits tribal communities. Other foundations indicated that they do not “specify any particular identity group” but work towards “valuing all people and all partners” in their regions. Furthermore, three foundations out of sixteen responses have indicated their organization is currently working on including more marginalized groups in their strategic plan.

## **Education From Within: Trainings and Workshops on Indigenous Histories, Issues, and Causes for Staff and Leadership**



An important takeaway from the interviews conducted in stage two of the project was the need for more philanthropy organizations to take actionable steps in reimagining and rebuilding structures centered on racial equity. This can be done in several ways, from addressing the power imbalances that exist within the sector to redesigning the organizational structures of philanthropic institutions<sup>[9]</sup>. A part of this initiative is to prioritize opportunities for increasing organizational knowledge and understanding of Native communities. The community foundation survey evaluated the foundation’s implementation of educational programs/trainings that included Native culture and Indigenous worldviews for both staff and leadership. In addition, the survey also evaluated the types of programs/training sessions organizations are implementing within their practices.

According to the survey, 33% of organizations indicated that they have implemented educational programs/training sessions that incorporate Native culture and Indigenous worldviews for staff and leadership. 38% indicated they do not, 14% have in the past, and 14% indicated they do not but are planning to implement them in the future.



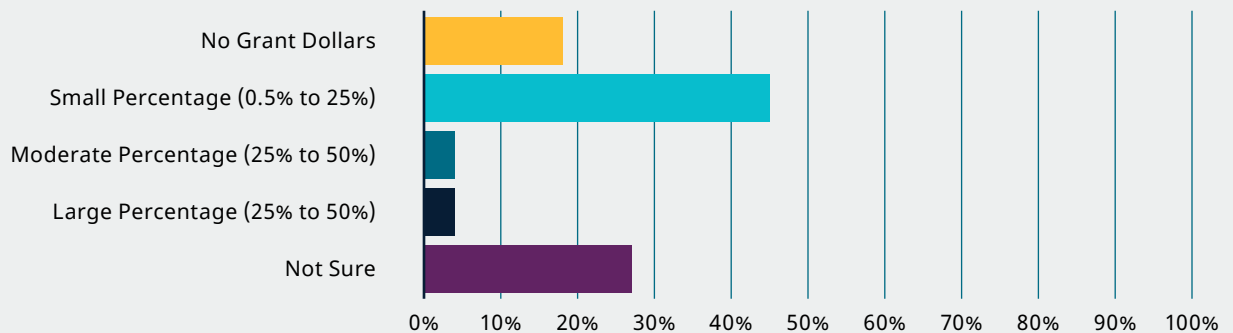


## Funding of Tribal Communities, Native-Led Organizations, and other Entities

Funding for Native American communities and causes has historically been underfunded and continues to be within the philanthropic sector. According to NAP's 2016 "Investing in Native Communities" report, Native Americans receive less than 0.4 percent of grant dollars on average.<sup>[10]</sup> Yet, the American Indian and Alaska Native population represents well over 2 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>[11]</sup> The community foundation survey evaluated the number of grant dollars that exclusively benefits Native American communities and causes. In addition, the survey also evaluated the number of grant dollars that exclusively benefits Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

According to the survey, approximately 18% of community foundations indicated they do not currently offer funding to Native American communities and causes, 45% indicated they offer a small percentage of grant dollars (0.5% to 25%) to Native American Communities and causes, 4% indicated they offer a moderate percentage (24% - 50%) and another 4% of community foundations offered a large percentage (50% - 100%). About 27% of community foundations responded with a "not sure" and responses varied from "We do not collect disaggregated data about race, ethnicity, or other forms of identity of people affected by our grants" to "unable to provide exact figure due to lack of adequate data on foundation grantmaking." Overall, the percentage of giving to Native American communities and causes ranged from less than 1% to 30%, with most organizations indicating that they have given less than 1% to Native communities.

Figure 2: Percentage of Grant Dollars Serving Native American Communities



A follow-up question requestws more information from community foundations who currently do not offer funding to Native American communities and causes regarding whether their foundation has or is currently developing an action plan for funding Native American communities. Only one response was received:

"We have been conducting outreach through our relationship networks to connect with Native or Indigenous communities/entities. We'd like to build relationships, understand what their needs and roles are in our region, and what role philanthropy can play."

## Program Support for Tribal Communities, Native-Led Organizations, and other Tribal Entities



Many community foundations offer technical assistance, training sessions, and other programs designed to support the needs of the communities they serve. Programs facilitated by community foundations are often centered around the mission and values of the organization or address challenges and needs of their communities. The community foundation survey evaluated the types of programs community foundations offer in support of Native Communities, Native-Led Organizations, and other Native entities. According to the survey, 43% of organizations indicated that they currently offer programming for Native Communities, Native-Led Organizations, and other Native entities. 57% indicated they do not offer programming. The types of programs offered by community foundations varied from Native-centered to broad support of Native peoples. Examples of programs offered by foundation respondents are shared below:

- **Native American Advised Fund:** Features programming that includes presenters educating the greater community on a range of tribal, Native, and Indigenous topics.
- **Capacity Building Collaborative and Community Caregivers Initiative:** Working with Indigenous communities to provide support during the pandemic, from behavioral health to primary care support. This foundation has expanded their Indigenous outreach to include Oaxacan Indigenous communities.
- **Regional Equity and Accountability Project:** Consists of Native advisors making funding decisions around housing access.
- **Parenting Education Cohort:** Targeted programming for Red Lake, White Earth, and Bemidji communities. The program is led by a Native contractor.
- **Climate Action Plan:** A foundation collaborated with White Earth on a climate action plan that included Winona LaDuke and other well-known Native leaders and individuals in climate action, food sovereignty, and education.





## UN Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of seventeen objectives that “provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.”<sup>[12]</sup> The SDGs were formulated in January 2015 with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The seventeen SDGs are as follows:



In 2020, the Mott Foundation and philanthropic researcher, Dr. Larry McGill, examined how community foundations can use SDGs to lead local revitalization efforts, advance racial equity and address the complexities of the pandemic.<sup>[13]</sup> According to the report, community foundations have begun to utilize the framework to build connections between their work and the SDGs. The framework may also help foundations “fill in the gaps in the way it may be thinking about its work” and possibly “discover opportunities to broaden or deepen its work and increase its impact.”<sup>[14]</sup>

The community foundation survey assessed the use of SDGs among the 154 community foundations we reached out to. Out of the 26 survey responses we received, only two organizations have adopted the SDGs as a part of their grantmaking framework. Nineteen organizations are familiar with the framework but currently do not implement it as a part of their processes. Five organizations were interested in learning more about the framework and how to adopt the SDGs as a part of their grantmaking practices.

Only two organizations indicated that they have implemented the SDG framework as a part of their strategic plan or their grantmaking practices. An example of this implementation is in the strategic plan of one community foundation, who utilized the SDGs as their guide to formulate their strategic priorities on a local and regional level with particular focus on “people, planet, and prosperity” as pillars to interconnection.

While Native Americans in Philanthropy finds the Sustainable Development Goals a helpful framework to organize many of the outcomes that tribal communities seek, we believe that the Five R’s of Indigenous Philanthropy is a helpful guide in understanding the needs of Indigenous communities from the perspective of Indigenous people. The Five R’s may also be helpful in reframing the SDGs to be more inclusive of Indigenous issues and causes.

## The Five R's: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships, and Redistribution



The International Funders for Indigenous Peoples organization shares the five Rs of Indigenous philanthropy as their mission and values to “reframe funding relationships” between foundations and grantees, as well as educate its members and allies to “practice a new paradigm of giving”.<sup>[15]</sup> The Five R's of Indigenous Philanthropy are: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships, and Redistribution. Each of these tenets will be further defined throughout this section of the report and are used to understand the current paradigms community foundations practice when partnering with organizations, communities, and other entities. The Five R's of Indigenous philanthropy were also used to design a framework of recommendations offered to community foundations as guidance for building relationships with Indigenous communities.



### Respect and Relationships

According to the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, respect is to “recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples’ rights and worldviews. Work directly with Indigenous communities to advance the principles articulated in the UN Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and to gain understanding about their aspirations, solutions, and initiatives.”<sup>[16]</sup> Another tenet is relationships, and to build relationships, one must “engage directly with Indigenous communities by understanding the nature of their relationships based on mutual respect and trust.”<sup>[17]</sup>

In the community foundation survey, we evaluated the community engagement/outreach initiatives of community foundations to understand their involvement with the communities they serve. Community engagement closely aligns with the tenet of respect and relationships as the ability to earn respect depends on the processes an organization takes to build relationships with other communities, learn from them, and as quoted previously, “to gain understanding about [the Indigenous peoples] aspirations, solutions, and initiatives.”<sup>[18]</sup>

According to the survey, heavy emphasis is placed on communication as a method for community engagement. Various organizations utilized programming such as webinars, listening sessions, regional meetings, and convenings to understand the different perspectives of the areas they serve. Other organizations also emphasized the importance of participating in community events as a form of engagement with the intent of “going where they are” instead of the community coming to the organizations’ events. Furthermore, some organizations who currently do not have community engagement plans in place, especially in connecting with Native communities, have requested resources or training to proactively engage with marginalized communities.



## Responsibility and Redistribution

To practice the tenet of responsibility is to “be accountable and transparent in ensuring the effective, meaningful and intersectional representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples is apparent... also to use funding processes and approaches that are accessible, adaptable, flexible, transparent, and accountable”.<sup>[19]</sup> Responsibility also aligns with the practice of redistribution by “building trust and ensuring Indigenous Peoples are at the decision-making table and directly funding Indigenous led solutions, initiatives, and organizations worldwide”.<sup>[20]</sup>

In the community foundation survey, we wanted to understand how equity and accountability are translated in the programmatic and organizational structure of community foundations. Most community foundations offered a textbook definition of equity and accountability. For example, one foundation defined equity as:

“The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.”

Furthermore, another organization defines accountability as such:

“I guess accountability basically means trustworthiness, reliability.”

Some organizations defined these terms in relation to the work they do within their foundations, by providing examples of how their relationship with others is important to addressing social and political issues within their communities while others see equity as rural equity and addressing the lack of access to healthcare, transportation, and other support services, and addressing accountability as listening to the community, understanding their needs, and addressing those needs by proposing community-based solutions.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this report highlighted several initiatives that community foundations have made to improve their connections with Native communities. Yet, significant gaps still exist between community foundations and Native entities. Our recommendations offer a step forward in building meaningful relationships between community foundations and Native peoples that could also serve the wider philanthropic sector. Building off the framework of the Five R's of Indigenous Philanthropy, we offer the following strategies:

### RESPECT

Recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights, and worldviews. Seek to uphold the principles articulated in the UN Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Work directly with Indigenous communities to advance these principles and to gain understanding about their aspirations, solutions and initiatives.<sup>[21]</sup>



- Brainstorm opportunities for deep listening between foundation leadership, staff, and Native communities. A critical step in building trust is to learn from others. Community foundations should brainstorm opportunities to connect with Native communities and Native-led organizations to not only understand Indigenous values, worldviews, and cultures, but to also understand the challenges Native organizations often tackle in philanthropy as well as the innovative practices many Native organizations have developed to address these challenges. Also, it is important for community foundations to understand the sociocultural movements many Native communities are implementing within their local communities and find ways to support those initiatives.
- Cultivate relationships with philanthropy networks, intermediaries, working groups, affinity groups, and coalitions who are shifting the processes of grantmaking, working towards Indigenizing philanthropy, and are making real transformational changes within the field. Participate in events, meetings, webinars, workshops, etc. to build on these relationships and develop a deeper understanding of Native communities and their causes.



## RECIPROCITY

Practice the essence of Indigenous ways of living, giving and sharing that connects people, their beliefs and actions. Be open to learning, unlearning, and receiving. Giving and receiving from a place of mutual benefit and solidarity is also part of a virtuous circle of healing principles.<sup>[22]</sup>

- Community Foundations need to develop and implement an internal analysis that examines their current grantmaking processes, whether Native Communities and Native organizations are represented in their mission, values, and strategic plan, and whether Native issues and causes are supported in their target areas.
- Develop partnerships with Native led organizations, intermediaries, and working groups to obtain resources and tools that center Indigenous history, culture, and worldviews while also learning and understanding current issues and grassroots causes that organizations can engage with and support. Furthermore, compensate all Native-led organizations and individuals fairly and adequately.
- Utilize these tools, resources, and partnerships to facilitate conversations, offer training, and create opportunities for unlearning misrepresentations and misperceptions of Indigenous people.

## RESPONSIBILITY



Be accountable and transparent in ensuring the effective, meaningful and intersectional representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples where critical decisions that affect them are made. Use funding processes and approaches that are accessible, adaptable, flexible, transparent, and accountable.<sup>[23]</sup>

- Encourage an ongoing process of reviewing and updating your organization's hiring practices and board recruitment to ensure that Indigenous people are properly represented in your organization. It is especially important to provide learning opportunities for your staff and board that centers cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to support Indigenous staff and provide a safe environment for individuals of color.
- Encourage your organization to learn about the history of philanthropy and acknowledge its extraction and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, their lands, resources, culture, and wellbeing. "Recognition will enable philanthropy to reflect on its past, which will provide clarity in how it intends to build better practices around giving".<sup>[24]</sup> Please note that this is an ongoing process and will not occur instantaneously.
- Encourage your organization to evaluate current grantmaking and decision-making processes and whether those processes are community centered, more specifically are grantmaking processes that are Indigenous centered led and implemented by Indigenous communities? If not, consider shifting your decision-making and grantmaking processes to be more inclusive of external decision-making led for and by the communities represented.



## RELATIONSHIPS

Engage directly with Indigenous communities by understanding the nature of their relationships with Mother Earth, their culture, traditions, and spirituality. Build and nurture relationships based on mutual respect and trust that eliminate the tendency to exert power over another through building long-term commitments and mutual learning.<sup>[25]</sup>

- Relationships and reciprocity go hand in hand as reciprocity is needed for relationships to emerge. With that, many changes need to happen for reciprocity to manifest within organizations. Some examples include changing the culture of funding to include Indigenous ways of giving, multi-year unrestricted funding, transparent and honest communication between funders and grantees, and continued support and communication before and after funding is given. We encourage community foundations to consider the following:
  - Evaluate your current grantmaking practices and community engagement initiatives to ensure that reciprocity is articulated and responds to the needs of Native communities and other historically marginalized communities.
  - build direct relationships with Native-led organizations within any pooled funds you are a part of and consider reaching out to Native-led philanthropic organizations like Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP), International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP), or First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) to build direct relationships with Native organizations and leaders.
  - Invest in Native staff and leadership at your organization so that they can help build meaningful relationships with tribal communities.
  - Invest in participatory grantmaking efforts and other meaningful ways where grantmaking practices can also build lasting relationships with community leaders.



## REDISTRIBUTION



Practice redistribution based on Indigenous Values and ways of living, sharing, and giving to shift towards a just and equitable world. Do this through building trust, ensuring Indigenous Peoples are at the decision-making table and directly funding Indigenous led solutions, initiatives, and organizations worldwide.<sup>[26]</sup>

- Invest in Native-led organizations (nonprofit, grassroots, etc.) by providing long-term unrestricted funding. By investing in these organizations, grantees can direct that funding to critical areas needed to support Native communities. This approach also “shifts power to the leaders who know how to best serve their communities and provides a more sustainable future for their organizations and initiatives.”<sup>[27]</sup>
- Foundations should invest in critical programs led by Tribal 7871 organizations. Alternatively, foundations should also educate themselves about 7871 organizations and how they are protecting tribal sovereignty.<sup>[28]</sup> First Nations Development Institute provides a report that sheds light on 7871 organizations and the opportunities and challenges many of these organizations often face, while also highlighting the benefits and methods of giving to these organizations. <sup>[29]</sup>
- Support Indigenous-led philanthropic entities, especially organizations working towards centering Indigenous philanthropic practices within the field, advancing Indigenous-led solutions and innovations, proactively engaging with tribal governance, etc. Connecting with these entities to learn from and build a relationship with that may guide your organization through this work.

### A note on Indigenous Communities:

It is important to understand that there are many Native nations in the United States, each with distinctive languages, cultures, ideologies, etc. There should be no assumption that these recommendations will work for all Native Nations. Foundations will need to learn about the Native communities that surround them and what will work best for them.



## MOVING FORWARD

This report has offered a series of recommendations through the lens of Indigenous philanthropy. Many of the recommendations are actionable items consistent with current studies offered by other organizations advocating for transformational change within the field of philanthropy. Changing systems and transforming them to include Indigenous people and communities is an ongoing process and further research and engagement will need to occur to truly transform philanthropy. To continue this research, we offer the following next steps in learning more about the relationship between community foundations and Native communities.

### 1. NATIVE AMERICANS IN PHILANTHROPY HOSTS A FALL CONVENING.



We propose a Fall convening of Indigenous leaders and Community Foundation leaders to discuss the findings and recommendations from this report while also creating a space for conversation about the themes that emerged from this research process and find opportunities or collaboration to address these emerging themes.





## 2. FURTHER RESEARCH ON UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION NATIONAL STANDARDS.

Out of the 26 organizations who responded to the community foundation survey, only two have adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a part of their strategic plan and organizational structure. Furthermore, out of the 26 organizations approximately 13 community foundations are accredited under the Community Foundations National Standards. We propose a study that compares and contrasts the SDGs Framework to the Community Foundation National Standards. Suggested focus areas for this study include how they address the issues of equity and accountability, how one framework may support the other, and whether each framework supports Indigenous communities and causes.

## 3. BUILD A COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK THAT CULTIVATES GREATER PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND NATIVE COMMUNITIES.



Utilizing both the environmental scan and results from the Fall convening, we propose the development of a framework that further supports collaboration and partnerships between community foundations and Native communities, Native-led organizations, Tribal Governments, and other Native entities. Our goal for this project is to develop a framework in collaboration with community foundations and Indigenous leaders in Philanthropy. To advance greater partnerships built on the tenets of Indigenous philanthropy, it is important for both entities to learn from each other and be able to build a narrative that is representative of community foundations and Native communities.



## CONCLUSION

The environmental scan has shared several examples of current funding relationships between community foundations and Native communities. We have learned that community foundations have given funding and offered programming that supports Native organizations greater than that of private, public, and corporate foundations. Yet, funding that supports Native causes is still well under 1% of total funding given by these foundations. We have also determined that Indigenous representation within the board and staff of community foundations remains predominately white, yet some community foundations have demonstrated small changes in their recruitment practices. Many other focus areas determined a strong connection to community issues and causes; yet significant gaps still exist in supporting the work of Native organizations and communities.

By utilizing the Five R's of Indigenous Philanthropy as a framework for understanding Indigenous giving, community foundations are afforded the opportunity to establish more meaningful relationships by which Indigenous communities are given greater voice and are able to communicate their needs. Our recommendations create discussion, convening, and consensus to establish an appropriate reception of equity and accountability from an Indigenous perspective. With more research and with more opportunities for collaboration between community foundations and Native communities, we may be able to build out a framework that is beneficial to both entities while still building and nurturing relationships that are built on respect, trust, and shared learning.



## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### FOR NATIVE-LED ORGANIZATIONS AND TRIBAL LEADERS

1. Please introduce yourself and please tell us what organization you work for and how long you have been with your current organization.
2. How long have you worked in philanthropy?
3. Please describe what funding looks like within Native American communities and with Indigenous people. What are some of the barriers that you see represented in local giving?
4. Please describe what diversity, equity and accountability means to you or to your community and how does this appear in your organization?
5. Are there innovative practices your foundation/organization has established in support of tribes or Native-led activities you'd be willing to share?
6. In what ways can community foundations support Native Communities and organizations that go beyond funding?
7. What other ideas or recommendations do you have for how funders/community foundations can improve their practices? Who else should we be talking to?

### FOR COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Community Foundation staff and leadership are asked the same questions above with the following additional questions.

8. Do you believe that your foundation's mission and core values reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability?
9. Are Native American communities included in this commitment? If so, can you provide some examples of initiatives that your organization has implemented.

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe the values, vision, and mission of your organization align with those of the communities you serve?
2. Does your organization have values, a vision, or a mission that outlines support for tribal communities, Native organizations, and Indigenous people within communities of impact?
3. Does your organization have Indigenous representation on your board's leadership?
4. Does your organization have Native American representation on staff?
5. Does your organization provide funding to communities of color?
6. Does your organization provide funding to tribal communities, Native organizations, Indigenous peoples, and other Native entities?
7. Based on the previous question, can you provide a reason as to why you no longer provide funding to Native or Indigenous communities/entities? Or if you plan to in the near future, what is your plan for implementing this initiative?
8. If your organization does provide funding to communities of color including tribal communities, Native organization, and Indigenous peoples, what percentage is it of your overall giving?
9. What types of programming does your organization provide for your grantees or members of your local community?
10. Does your organization currently implement programming for tribal communities, Native organizations, Indigenous peoples, and other Native entities?
11. If you answered yes, what types of programming does your organization currently provide for tribal communities, Native organizations, Indigenous peoples, and other Native entities?
12. What do the terms "equity" and "accountability" mean to your organization?
13. What does community outreach/engagement look like for your organization? What best practices do you use in connecting with your community?

14. Has your organization historically and/or currently implement educational programs and/or training sessions that focus specifically on Native culture and Indigenous worldviews for your staff and leadership?
15. Has your organization adopted/implemented the United Nations' sustainable development goals as a framework for grantmaking?
16. How does your foundation measure relationship building with tribal communities?
17. Are there certain initiatives/requirements you expect from your grantees that ensure reciprocity is implemented?
18. Does your organization provide opportunities for endowment building or capacity building?
19. Are you interested in learning more about the findings from this project once it is complete?

## ENDNOTES

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NATIVE AMERICANS  
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