

Reclaiming Philanthropy: Re-centering Native Giving in Respect, Relationships, Reciprocity,  
and Communal Responsibility

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**Abstract**

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My research grounds itself in examining the fields of institutional philanthropy and Native philanthropy as a means of providing some context for why this area of study is important and to understand the limitations of different types of funding. In tracing the divergent histories of these major areas of philanthropy, I reveal the embedded philosophies, values, and ways in which power operates through their structures in the forms of eligibility criteria, grant-making policies, types of funding available, and how accountability is defined. It is my belief that we must first build a better understanding of the funding ecosystem if we are to truly support the critical work that Native communities are undertaking in their cultural resurgence efforts. I also believe that most of the work needs to be done within the philanthropic sector to radically

change its core beliefs and practices so that more money is available to Black and Indigenous communities as forms of reparations and restorative justice. This alone is justification for dramatically increasing the amount of funding that goes towards supporting Native communities from less than .5% to an amount that is a just and proportional to our surviving percentage of the population. Finally, my research retraces and reclaims those traditional practices within Native American communities and examine that in contrast to what modern philanthropy has become. What can we learn by re-centering traditional practices of philanthropy? Ultimately, my driving question that I explore in this dissertation is: How do we reimagine philanthropy as reparations to Black and Indigenous communities, at whose expense the wealth of the United States was built upon through the theft of Native lands and the exploitation of Black labor?

## **Acknowledgements**

I began this PhD journey in the fall of 2006, immediately after completing a M.Ed. from the University of Washington College of Education. I completed all of my coursework and began preparation for exams, but decided to take a break so I could focus on more tangible ways to support Native communities. This led to my career in philanthropy where I have more than 15 years of expertise as a senior leader, board member, grant reviewer, and consultant. Since then I've processed a lot of the experiences I've had and knew that our sector could and should do better. I resumed work on this dissertation in 2020 and wrote my qualifying exams during the height of the pandemic in 2021. My anger and sorrow grew as I watched the billionaire class get wealthier while everyone I knew struggled in every way imaginable. But I also drew inspiration from this time about how we might be in solidarity with one another.

More than anything I want to convey that I'm not self-made, I'm community-made. I owe so much gratitude to everyone who has supported me on this journey with emotional support, academic support, financial support, and those who sent encouragement, snacks, and messages of support over these past few years. You know who you all are!

At the heart of this work is my family - including father Paul Wilfred Chavez, mother Valerie Taliman, sister Tazbah Rose Chavez, brothers Paul Ohnopee Chavez and Shondeen Stone Chavez, and my nephew Shondeen Stone Chavez, Jr. – who have kept me grounded in love, culture, and family. You taught me the importance of community and helped instill in me a deep sense of relationality and responsibility as I'm also a granddaughter, daughter, sister, and auntie as well as a scholar, professional, and strong and resilient Native woman.

I want to share deep appreciation for everyone who contributed their lived experience, stories, and expertise to this dissertation as study participants. Collectively, we have more than 500 years of experience and are actively working to re-Indigenize philanthropy. I appreciate all that you shared with me and the extra time and care you put into reviewing drafts to make sure I captured your words and intention with accuracy.

I also have gratitude for so many people within Native and social justice philanthropy including my past and present colleagues at Potlatch Fund, Native Voices Rising, and my collaborative thought partners at Native Americans in Philanthropy.

Thank you to my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Django Paris, Dr. Manka Varghese, Dr. Charlotte Coté, and Dr. Bonnie Duran. Your mentorship and support carried me through this process and allowed me to write the dissertation I was meant to write and allowed me to share these stories with an institution that hasn't always valued this kind of work.

So much love to my academic family including my Django & Fam crew: Dr. Kriya Velasco, Dr. Jazmen Moore, Dr. Jeff Stone, Dr. Alayna Eagle Shield, and Dr. Doua Kha. I'm especially grateful to Alayna and Jazmen for the loving support offered in our Zoom writing sessions. You gently pushed me to make this a better research project.

Thank you to Dr. Michelle Montgomery at the University of Washington Tacoma for inviting me to participate in Indigenous Writing Retreats in Fall 2022 where I could grow my community of support with other Indigenous scholars and focus on writing at a critical time.

Finally, I'm deeply appreciative for the funding support I received from Native Forward through the Community Impact Scholarship and the UW Center for American Indian and Indigenous Scholars fellowship support through the 2022-2023 AIIS Scholars program.

## **Dedication**

*To my Grandma Dorothy Chavez,*

*Thank you for taking me in as family, nurturing me in ways that taught me how to show up and care for others, and embodying generosity so deeply that you inspired me to give as a profession.*

*To my nephew Shondeen Jr. Chavez,*

*May your life be one of abundance and your future supported by your family and ancestors who made tremendous sacrifices but nonetheless survived so you could thrive.*

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## **Reclaiming Philanthropy: Re-centering Native Giving in Respect, Relationships, Reciprocity, and Communal Responsibility**

“Last year I pledged to give the majority of my wealth back to the society that helped generate it, to do it thoughtfully, to get started soon, and to keep at it until the safe is empty. There’s no question in my mind that anyone’s personal wealth is the product of a collective effort, and of social structures which present opportunities to some people, and obstacles to countless others” (Scott, 2020).

This is a dissertation focused on reclaiming philanthropy to center and sustain Native communities, as we have always done through our traditional giving practices. This research study also draws upon Indigenous storytelling as methodology – including personal stories from my own career as a Native woman leader in the philanthropy sector. As such, I want to begin by comparing and contrasting two very different stories about giving that I experienced in over the past four years. One is based on my experience as a board member when Native Forward (formerly the American Indian Graduate Center) received a \$20-million-dollar unrestricted gift from MacKenzie Scott<sup>1</sup> as part of her first wave of giving in July 2020. The opening quote is Scott’s own words as she issued a public statement through *Medium* to briefly explain how she is thinking about her innovative giving.

It also explains why she chose to prioritize 116 foundations, nonprofits, and higher education institutions that are committed to racial equity, LGBTQ+ equity, gender equity, economic mobility, empathy and bridging divides, functional democracy, public health, global development, and climate change. In her words, “on this list, 91% of the racial equity organizations are run by leaders of color, 100% of the LGBTQ+ equity organizations are run by LGBTQ+ leaders, and 83% of the gender equity organizations are run by women, bringing lived

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly MacKenzie Bezos as she was married to Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos.

experience to solutions for imbalanced social systems” (Scott, 2020). When Native Forward received this gift to help fund scholarships for Native American students, it was not just pivotal in securing the sustainability of the organization, but it helped to raise the visibility of the mission, leadership, and impact within the field among other funders. Native Forward<sup>2</sup> CEO Angelique Albert expressed gratitude and noted that this gift also has the ability “to transform the relationship between Native Americans and the American educational system” since “access to higher education is a tool for Native community empowerment despite historical trauma” (2020).

My other opening story is based on my experience and the perspective that I shared with the Native Voices Rising advisory committee in response to an email from our host partner Common Counsel Foundation<sup>3</sup> in October 2021. The foundation staff had reached out to us with an urgent email and request for a videoconference call to gauge whether we might feel conflicted about applying for a \$5 million dollar grant from the Bezos Earth Fund as some might consider the source of it to be “dirty money”. It was not lost on me that Bezos Earth Fund is the philanthropic project of Jeff Bezos and funded by his Amazon wealth; as it is also the source of MacKenzie Scott’s wealth that was divided in their divorce settlement. While we debated this opportunity, Common Counsel Foundation simultaneously advocated for the Bezos Earth Fund to consider regranteeing directly to Native-led environmental groups as is consistent with our theory of change. They suggested reaching out to other Native-led grant intermediaries like

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<sup>2</sup> Native Forward was formerly named American Indian Graduate Center (AIGC). The citation for this quote is listed under AIGC (2020).

<sup>3</sup> During the writing of this dissertation, I accepted a position with Native Voices Rising and I am an employee of Common Counsel Foundation. For full transparency, NVR and Common Counsel Foundation received a \$5 million gift from MacKenzie Scott in 2021. This was prior to when I accepted the job offer in 2023 and does not reflect a bias towards this donor.

Indigenous Environmental Network, Seventh Generation Fund, NDN Collective, and First Nations Development Institute as potential grantees.

While Native Voices Rising (NVR) was not invited to submit a full proposal, our advisory group was able to come to consensus that we wanted to move forward with reapplying again in 2022 with the following conditions: 1) it is acceptable to receive the money as long as it does not change the way that NVR operates (i.e. no restrictions on our focus of supporting grassroots organizing and advocacy work); 2) the money cannot come from sources that are actively harming Native communities; 3) we recognize that there is value to NVR being in relationship and in conversation with Bezos Earth Fund and having a seat at this influential table.

One of the things that has continued to resonate with me across these two stories is the difference between giving philosophies between two billionaires who once shared a home, a marriage, and a vast source of wealth. Since her divorce from Jeff Bezos, MacKenzie Scott's wealth has fluctuated over the years along with the value of her shares: "Scott became a billionaire in 2019 after Bezos transferred a quarter of his Amazon holdings – 19.7 million shares – to her as part of their divorce settlement. She was the 22nd richest person in the world in 2020 (worth \$36 billion then) and 22nd richest in 2021 (\$53 billion). Now, she's fallen to the 30th richest" (Sandler, 2022). However, part of why her wealth has decreased is because Scott has given away \$16.5 billion dollars to more than 1,900 nonprofits since 2020.

In March 2024, Scott innovated again by giving away another \$640 million in the first open call process<sup>4</sup> to 361 community-led and community-focused nonprofits. This round of

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<sup>4</sup> Open call refers to a grant application process that issues a publicly announced request-for-proposals (RFP) whereas a closed process is not publicly announced and applications are accepted by invitation-only.

giving was more than double what she had planned to give, as Scott had envisioned giving \$250 million in \$1 million dollar gifts to 250 nonprofits (Lever for Change, 2024). When an overwhelming number of 6,353 organizations applied for the \$1 million dollar gifts, Scott and Lever for Change<sup>5</sup> adapted the process. Instead of giving \$1 million dollar grants, they created a two-tier system with the 279 highest scoring applicants receiving \$2 million and the remaining 82 nonprofits receiving \$1 million (Beaty, 2024). Scott has created a public database that details all of these gifts on a website called Yield Giving (2022).

I've also grappled with the reception within Native spaces to these acts of giving and the interpretation of the motives of institutional philanthropy. I've been privy to the kinds of conversations that these two Native-led organizations had to navigate internally about whether to accept these gifts or grants. But I seek to understand the bigger narrative as these are the kinds of questions that Native people working in the field of philanthropy are currently wrestling with. I would argue that a fundamental tension at the core of both scenarios is the difference in values between how private and institutional philanthropy<sup>6</sup> operates and the values of respect, reciprocity, relationships, and communal responsibility that Native communities have long held as core to our cultural ways of being and conducting our business.

In her book that critically examines the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's philanthropic giving, and how it continues to replicate the problems its claims to solve, author Linsey McGoey (2015) argues that the "cleanliness" of *any* money gained through our modern predatory

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<sup>5</sup> To learn more about Lever for Change's Yield Giving RFP, please see:

<https://www.leverforchange.org/challenges/explore-challenges/yieldgivingopencall/>

<sup>6</sup> Brief definition of terms: Within this research I designate between Native philanthropy and institutional philanthropy, which "refers to foundations created by wealthy philanthropists" (Carson, 1999, pgs. 149-150). I will further define Native philanthropy in Chapter 4 on Native Giving.

capitalist practices should be questioned. But is it really “dirty money” if we follow its lineage all the way back to its pre-colonial roots? One of the tensions that keeps coming up for me in this body of work is: Is there ever a way to negotiate receiving money that is inherently tainted by the way it was created because it was made illegally or immorally? While some might argue for a “purity” litmus test within a donor gift acceptance policy as a way to resolve this issue, I believe that we need to first ground ourselves in the understanding that all this country’s wealth is possible only because of Indigenous land and natural resources and the labor of enslaved Black people.

### **The “Four Pandemics” That Emerged in 2020**

**Figure 1**

*Several thousand people standoff with the Seattle Police Department on Capitol Hill.*

Note. Rutz, D. 2020, *The Seattle Times*



I also want to acknowledge that I started early work on this dissertation during a particularly stark moment in spring 2020. While we were already a society ensnared in systemic racism and a rapidly escalating climate crisis, we were not prepared for the COVID-19 global health crisis and the ensuing economic instability that it would cause. We were not prepared for the visceral pain and anger that erupted in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder by Minneapolis police that led to mass protests against racism and police brutality, which helped to fuel the Black Lives Matter movement. We were not prepared for the heatwaves, ensuing wildfires, and ominous orange clouds of wildfire smoke that engulfed much of the West Coast – causing many of us to also feel like we couldn’t breathe. Suddenly it felt like the world as we once knew it was ending.

Eritrean scholar Sefanit Habtom and Cree scholar Megan Scribe captured the collective panic of this moment by writing in June 2020, “As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, many increasingly ask, ‘when will things go back to normal?’, ‘can we ever go back to the way things were?’ and, in even more frightened moments, ‘could this be the end of the world?’” But they also recognized that this could be a moment when we could learn how to “breathe with” or be in solidarity with one another in such critical times. Black scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings (2021) described this particularly jarring combination of concurrent crises in 2020 as the “four pandemics”, but also framed this within the possibility that we could use this moment to reset educational spaces toward justice.

Other writers, including Black scholar Robyn Maynard and Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, reflected on this tumultuous period in their co-authored book, *Rehearsals for Living* (2022), where they reminded us that within the history of the United

States, Native and Black people have already experienced their own versions of the apocalypse – and they survived. In her letter to Simpson, Maynard writes:

Of course, our histories are intertwined with one another’s... Put otherwise, the massive destruction, gendered and murderous, of (Indigenous) human life and land dispossession; the commodification, exploitation and fungibility of (Black) human life; and the relentless expropriation and destruction of non-human nature are inextricably linked: a disregard for all living things *except for their value as property to be accumulated* (2022, pgs. 23-24).

What did not die was capitalism. In a somewhat surprising turn of events, the global COVID-19 pandemic made the rich even wealthier and widened the income inequality gap (Chancel et al., 2021).

### **Philanthropy’s Response to the Ever-Widening Wealth Gap**

Given the dramatic shifts in the stock market during the COVID-19 pandemic, we can only assume that these combined assets have grown astronomically over 2020-2021 alone as billionaires almost solely benefitted from the investment boom. A website tracking inequality in the United States reports that during the pandemic, billionaire wealth increased by 44% or \$1.3 trillion dollars. “As of the market close on Friday, February 19 [2021], the country’s 664 billionaires now have combined wealth of \$4.3 trillion, up from just under \$3 trillion on March 18, 2020” (Collins, 2021). This happened while millions of Americans coped with job loss, limited unemployment benefits, closing businesses, and months-long quarantine – all of this disproportionately impacting BIPOC communities, especially Native Americans.

*The New York Times* daily case count tracker revealed that, as of April 21, 2021, 31.8 million people contracted COVID-19 and 568,131 died from the virus. By March 2024, when the pandemic had significantly slowed but not yet ended, 6,891,605 Americans had been hospitalized and 1,185,413 had died from COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, 2024). While the exact number remains unknown due to loss of funding and the political will to keep tracking the case count data, approximately 77.5% of the U.S. population contracted the virus – including many who were re-infected – and an unknown number continue to suffer from long-COVID symptoms (Murez, 2023).

In a word, this kind of inequality is unconscionable, and the philanthropy sector quickly responded with a myriad of COVID-19 relief funds, and by increasing their unrestricted giving to support nonprofits during this historically challenging moment. The Giving Pledge, started in 2010 by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett, asks billionaires to pledge to give away the majority of their collective wealth within a generation. It has since grown in 2020 to include 200 of the wealthiest families in the world, many of whom have their own private or family foundations. However, even aggressively giving away billions of dollars in a single year may not result in a full spend-down of this kind of wealth. For example, MacKenzie Scott gave away nearly \$6 billion of the wealth she gained from Amazon in 2020 at the same time that her wealth nearly tripled from \$23.6 billion to \$60.7 billion (Alexander & Steverman, 2020).

Even though an additional 38 billionaires<sup>7</sup> signed onto the Giving Pledge, the vast majority of those pledges aren't being converted fast enough during this ongoing economic crisis to undo the harm (Gamboa, 2021). While some foundations are making bold moves in their commitments to give more, many are still doing the bare minimum and staying within the 5% annual payout from their endowments. This is why I bring up the notable exception of MacKenzie Scott's bold and innovative giving in 2020 and 2021, where she gave out at least

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<sup>7</sup> This number has been modified from 17 (as cited by Gamboa in 2021) to 38 billionaires from 2019-2023 with data supplied by The Giving Pledge: <https://givingpledge.org/pledgers>

\$8.5 billion of her \$59 billion Amazon fortune, which was also atypical in its process of independently vetting and pre-screening grant awardees prior to any notification of the gift (Hinchliffe, 2021).

Other bold moves in the sector include recent major gifts to Native-led foundations, including a \$50 million trust from the Bush Foundation to NDN Collective, who were selected to be their Community Trust Fund partner along with Nexus Community Partners. In their announcement, The Bush Foundation explicitly stated their strategic plan was “to address racial wealth gaps caused by historic racial injustice [by awarding] \$100 million in new funding... to be stewarded by organizations that have deep understanding of and connection to Black and Native communities across our region... and they are deeply committed to building wealth for Black and Native people” (2021).

Following up on my earlier story, another \$5 million was awarded to First Nations Development Institute from the Bezos Earth Fund, which might signal more long-term trends towards more significant investments and a building of deeper trust within the field to Native-led foundations. They plan to use these funds to “help tribes and Native-led nonprofit organizations conduct and operationalize climate change plans and amplify the power of traditional ecological knowledge” by establishing a Racial Equity Justice 40 project with a \$1 million grant fund that will provide support for up to 10 tribes and Native-led nonprofits in their work to create more green jobs and implement climate resilience plans (First Nations Development Institute, 2021).

However, the Overlooked Report (Parks, 2021; Buteau et al., 2021) argues that Native communities and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities are still

systematically overlooked by funders, and their leaders have fewer positive experiences with their foundation funders. This is not surprising as it mirrors my own often disappointing experiences as a Native woman in philanthropy, witnessing revolving foundation staff, changing priorities, and a lack of understanding about Native American people, our cultures, and our histories. In contrast to the astounding amounts of wealth concentrated in institutional and social justice philanthropy, the sector of Native philanthropy is still struggling as much as it was when it was formalized in 1989 to get an equitable and just share of the resources. Despite being the original philanthropists of this country, Native American communities and issues continue to be chronically underfunded (Potlatch Fund, 2021).

As the national affinity group for Native American foundations and nonprofits, Native Americans in Philanthropy has done an excellent job of compiling funding data and trends and has built out an interactive map to show how funders are investing in Native communities and organizations that can be filtered by geography, funding priority area, and number of funders per state or region. Their data set also reveals that from 2006-2023, 6,191 foundations and private charities have given \$3.9 billion in the form of 55,034 grants to 5,808 recipient organizations (Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2021). While this may seem impressive by numbers, it still only accounts for 0.4% of all philanthropic giving by large U.S. foundations to Native communities. They challenge the sector to give more equitably and consider supporting Native-led solutions to community challenges. In addition, the data set compiled by CANDID revealed that of the giving to Native communities and issues, it was done by only 20% of the foundations in the United States. In 2015-2016, the top 10 funders of Native Americans were: 1) W.K. Kellogg Foundation; 2) NoVo Foundation; 3) Margaret A. Cargill

Foundation; 4) Bush Foundation; 5) Northwest Area Foundation; 6) The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; 7) Ford Foundation; 8) Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; 9) Lilly Endowment Inc.; 10) The California Endowment (Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2019, pg. 17).

As a leader in the field of Native philanthropy, one of my most critical observations is that there is a dire need to help the philanthropic sector understand the historical connections between where the wealth of the United States originated and what that means for its responsibility for addressing the myriad of devastating impacts to its Indigenous people, who have been irreparably harmed by colonization. Native people should not be experiencing economic poverty when “much of philanthropy’s wealth resulted from profiting from resources that were ceded by tribes or taken by force by colonizers moving onto Indigenous lands” (Philanthropy Northwest, 2020, pg. 1).

One of my goals for my dissertation is to make sense of some of the experiences I’ve had during my decade of working as a Native woman in the field of Native philanthropy that I didn’t have the language or conceptual frameworks to fully unpack at the time. These experiences grounded me in being able to see the stark differences between the practice of philanthropy (in which many communities of color have traditional ways of giving) and the institution of philanthropy (which has become professionalized into a multi-billion-dollar sector). These moments often revealed a contradiction of values and different understandings about concepts like poverty and wealth. The philanthropic sector has largely defined these concepts as functions of capitalism and has focused on using wealth to solve poverty without the understanding that much of the root of poverty has been the exploitation of land, natural resource extraction, and people that wealth creation demanded.

In this dissertation I will argue that *reparative giving* is one of the most compelling ways that the philanthropy sector can begin to undo the historical harms of land theft and slavery and begin to mitigate the racial wealth gap. In 2020, Justice Funders and The Resonance Collaborative published their *Resonance Framework*, which shared their vision for what a Just Transition could look like in philanthropy. The Framework also gave language to the conditions we have been struggling to define. They wrote:

It is time for philanthropy to embrace the principles of Just Transition. A Just Transition requires us to acknowledge the impact of the extractive economy on marginalized communities, repair the harms of our long history of exploitation and reject the continued accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few... This necessitates the redistribution of social, political and economic resources and the incorporation of a reparations framework... This is why we need a new vision for philanthropy. We must fundamentally shift our relationship to capital and actualize philanthropy's potential to support the collective capacity of communities in their production, rather than consumption, of resources and wealth.

The Land Back and reparations movements are examples of what reparative giving could do to begin to heal Native and Black communities by investing in and supporting their collective capacity.

### **Exploring the Possibilities for Solidarity Between the Land Back Movement for Native Communities and the Call for Reparations for Black Communities**

Original tweet: "The indigenous urge to always imagine what the land used to look like pre colonization" (Durden, @Ta7aKosos, Twitter, 2021).

Reply: "Almost cried reading this. I equally imagine what the land will look like once we destroy white supremacy/colonization/capitalism. Dreaming a different reality is necessary for [i]t to occur" (Fawcett, @wendyjf, Twitter, 2021).

"Land is already wealth; it is already divided; and its distribution is the greatest indicator of racial inequality. Indeed, the current wealth crisis facing the 99% spiraled with the crash in home/land ownership. Land (not money) is actually the basis for U.S. wealth. If

we took away land, there would be little wealth left to distribute” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pg. 24).

The first quote echoes the thought I often have while hiking on any land known as being part of the traditional territories of tribal nations, but I also consider it when I’m walking through a dense urban core and taking in the skyline of any major American city: you are (always and already) on Native land. The second quote comes from Tuck and Yang’s often cited 2012 article “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” which calls for the end of the use of the term decolonization within education and social science research unless it truly means what it was intended to mean: the rematriation<sup>8</sup> of Indigenous land and life. As Quechua scholar Sandy Grande reminds us, “For Native peoples, the structures of settler colonialism precipitate distinctive forms and modalities of Indigenous resistance. Struggle, in this context, is organized around *decolonization*—a political project that begins and ends with land and its return” (2018, pg. 53).

But it also speaks to the relationship between land and wealth. While Native Americans were largely stripped of our land and resources through colonization, we aren’t without some measure of wealth. In a new series of articles called the Indigenous Economics Project in *Indian Country Today*, Shoshone-Bannock author Mark Trahan argues that while Native people have largely been stripped of their material wealth, there’s another way to think about Indigenous economics. “There are other powerful economic stories worth thinking about. Let’s start with land. The largest landholder in the United States, at least according to most counts, stands at

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<sup>8</sup> I use the term land “rematriation” instead of repatriation in this dissertation, which is consistent with how Indigenous leaders across the Land Back movement have framed their work. For example, Sogorea Té Land Trust (2022) describes rematriation as “Indigenous women-led work to restore sacred relationships between Indigenous people and our ancestral land, honoring our matrilineal societies, and in opposition of patriarchal violence and dynamics”.

2.2 million acres. The list of the 'top 100' U.S. landowners ends at 13,000 acres. (Bill Gates, one of the richest people on the planet, has title to some 220,000 acres.) Pffff. Indigenous people, tribal governments and enterprises control more than 56 million acres. And that's just trust land. Add to that the privately owned land" (Trahant, 2022). Juxtapose that figure with the ways that we commonly think about the economics of Native people which is the direct result of being displaced from their land: "AI/AN people have the highest poverty rate (23%) and among the lowest labor force participation (less than 60% in 2018) compared with any other major racial group in the United States, resulting in cycles of generational poverty and poorer health and economic outcomes" (Pathak, 2021).

Native Americans are in the process of acquiring even more land either through purchasing it or through the Land Back movement. Despite the gains that tribes have made in getting some of their land back, there are still those who don't think it's a viable solution or are confused about how it works. Much of the apparent "confusion" about what the goals of the Land Back movement are can be attributed to a lack of historical knowledge, willful ignorance (as we've also seen with the backlash to Critical Race Theory in public schools), and internalized settler capitalist notions of property ownership. It is problematic to only think of land as "private property" that one can own across generations, develop, exploit, or sell for profit instead of the Indigenous notion of treating land as our relative (Simpson, 2017, pg. 78). But I would argue that there's also a lack of concrete examples for white settler descendants to imagine what giving land back to its original Native inhabitants and caretakers might actually look like.

In the last three years we have witnessed more than a few isolated examples of how the Land Back movement is happening across the Pacific Northwest. In December 2021, two miles of waterfront and 125 acres of tidelands were rematriated back to the Squaxin Island Tribe in Washington. This land gift was significant because it was part of their ancestral lands and waters and was given back from the timber company, Port Blakely Companies, which acquired it after the Tribe ceded land with the signing of the 1854 Medicine Creek Treaty (Mapes, 2021). The Tribe was also able to separately buy back an additional 875 acres of forest lands that were also part of their traditional territories. In a statement made by Port Blakely President Mike Warjone, he said this decision serves as a concrete action that a mere land acknowledgement doesn't usually commit to. "Just an acknowledgment about the place would ring hollow if the only owner of record was still around, and the people it was stolen from were alive and well, and right up the street. The obvious thing to do was simply give it back. Frankly I feel a little like, why didn't we think of this earlier? ... It's about time." (Mapes, 2021). The tribe plans to use the land for ceremonial purposes with Tribal Chairman Kris Peters saying, "I can't wait to drum, and sing, and dance out on those beaches, just like our people did hundreds, and thousands of years ago. To me it is a very spiritual thing; it fills my heart."

Another example comes from the Duwamish Tribe, which shares ancestral lands and waters with the Muckleshoot, Suquamish, and Tulalip Tribes in what is now known as Seattle. This claim to traditional territory has been contested often since the Duwamish Tribe does not have federal recognition, though it continues to exist and operate as a nonprofit organization and still retains an acre of land from its original 54,000 acres. With grant support from the City of Seattle and Seattle Global Shapers, the Shared Spaces Foundation was able to purchase 3.56

acres of land within the West Seattle Greenbelt to rehabilitate, reserve for environmental preservation, and rematriate back to the Duwamish Tribe in 2022. “The Duwamish tribe said that in the short term, it plans to use the land as a gathering space for cultural and educational programs. Eventually, though, it hopes that the land can be used in other ways that benefit the tribe and its community, including potentially providing housing for homeless residents” (Kaur, 2021).

Across the nation, there have been other acts of land rematriation like this which have given oxygen to the sparks of the Land Back movement and lit the fires. In December 2020, the U.S. Department of Interior returned 18,000 acres of ancestral land that had been designated in 1908 for the National Bison Range back to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Montana. With Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American cabinet secretary, and President Joe Biden’s leadership, it is expected that the federal government will move to protect more sacred sites and rematriate more ancestral lands back to tribes. In 2021 in California, the federally unrecognized Esselen Tribe received back 1,200 acres of their ancestral land near Big Sur after a decades-long process. It involved what was then known as the Adler Ranch, its Swedish landowner, Axel Adler, and the Western Rivers Conservancy (Simons, 2021).

This was the second time that Western Rivers Conservancy had worked with a tribe to reclaim ancestral land, as they worked with the Yurok Tribe to buy back 50,000 acres along the Klamath River from the Green Diamond Resource timber company in 2018. Progressive and justice-oriented local and regional land trusts are finding creative and legal ways to fulfill the dream of Land Back (Robbins, 2021). This is also becoming more of a trend among the progressive and wealthy to the degree that social justice foundation Resource Generation

created a tool kit to help young people with generational wealth and whose families might own land that could be rematriated back to Native people (Resource Generation, 2018).

This is also coupled with concrete examples of how reparations to Black families and communities are happening across in the United States. In September 2021, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill SB796 into law, which returned a parcel of land known as “Bruce’s Beach” in Manhattan Beach back to the Bruce family. Charles and Willa Bruce purchased the beachfront land in 1912 for \$1,225 and eventually turned it into a resort that was one of the only beaches in Los Angeles County that was open to Black families. They lost the property in 1924 when a racist real-estate broker petitioned the city council to condemn the property and used eminent domain to seize the land and turn it into a public park (Moore, 2021). Eventually they were given a settlement of \$14,500 for a property that is now estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars. Moore tells the story of how a combination of community advocacy from Justice for Bruce’s Beach, along with pressure mounting from our current movement for racial justice, pushed the L.A. County Supervisors to vote unanimously to approve returning the land back. It took additional legislation from the California State Senate and Governor Newsom due to legal restrictions, but the land was finally returned back the Bruce family and its descendants in October 2021.

Similarly, in March 2021, the city council in Evanston, Illinois voted to approve the Local Reparations Restorative Housing Program that will “grant qualifying [Black] households up to \$25,000 for down payments or home repairs” and is the first program to be funded from the city’s reparations fund that was created in 2019 (Treisman, 2021). The program is designed intentionally to address the harm created by discriminatory housing policies and represents “a

step towards revitalizing, preserving, and stabilizing Black/African American owner-occupied homes in Evanston” by “increasing homeownership and building the wealth... building intergenerational equity... and improving the retention rate of Black/African American homeowners in the City of Evanston” (Treisman, 2021). While the housing reparations program is currently budgeted at \$400,000, the city’s overall reparation fund may grow as large as \$10 million dollars, with revenue from the city’s tax on the sale of recreational marijuana.

Ray and Perry (2020) argue in their policy brief, *Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans*, that “Black Americans are the only group that has not received reparations for state-sanctioned racial discrimination, while slavery afforded some white families the ability to accrue tremendous wealth.” They outline many options for reparations policies that target the descendants of enslaved Black Americans including: 1) individual payments; 2) college tuition to 4-year and 2-year colleges and universities; 3) student loan forgiveness; 4) down payment grants and housing revitalization grants; 5) and business grants. Any combination of these into a reparations package would seek to restore “the wealth that has been extracted from Black people and communities” (Ray & Perry, 2020). While some critics might think these policies are too farfetched and expensive, support has been growing for U.S. bill H.R. 40, which would create a federal commission to study slavery and structural discrimination and address potential proposals for reparations. In April 2021, the bill gained additional traction among Democrats and may eventually reach the House floor for a vote (Lockhart, 2021).

While I situate my argument for Land Back in concepts of tribal sovereignty, I ground my argument in support of Black reparations for slavery on Ta-Nehisi Coates’s essay “The Case for Reparations”, which was originally published in *The Atlantic* in 2014. Coates traces the long

history of institutional racism by sharing the personal story of Clyde Ross and his fight for justice, along with the other Contract Buyers League in 1968. These racist and legal policies prevented Black families from owning homes and land, starting with slavery, the sharecropping system, and into present day forms of racial discrimination within the mortgage industry and federal housing policy, including the practice of segregation through redlining. Over time the collective impact of these acts of systemic racism have contributed to the intergenerational racial wealth gap, in which Black families have significantly less wealth and are less prepared for financial emergencies. “The Pew Research Center estimates that white households are worth roughly 20 times as much as black households, and that whereas only 15 percent of whites have zero or negative wealth, more than a third of [B]lacks do” (Coates, 2018, pg. 156). Coates’s essay provides concrete examples of historical examples and current proposals for reparations (including HR 40) and makes the argument that the United States not only has a moral obligation to redistribute wealth back to African Americans for their stolen slave labor, but that “we cannot escape our history” or reconcile it without making amends (2018, pg. 206).

Natives who are seeking land repatriation and even reparations also center their claim on a historical and a moral obligation to make amends for past harms. In a December 2021 statement to acknowledge the acceptance of the Bush Foundation’s \$50 million dollar Community Trust Fund, NDN Collective President & CEO Nick Tilsen argued that:

This isn’t reparations. Systematic racism and historical oppression is what has created inequality in society today. I don’t consider giving back dollars here and there in small amounts, reparations. Reparations need to be system-wide. Reparations need to have the impact that the stealing of our land had on us. It needs to have the impact that slavery had. I don’t believe we can call these things reparations in terms of systems... What I do think this is, is like casting a stone in a pond by taking a significant step in acknowledging that individual and institutional wealth in America has been built on the backs of Black slave labor, the genocide of Indigenous people and the theft of

Indigenous land— that’s one thing I like about what Bush did here in acknowledging that as reasoning behind this monetary commitment— it is casting the stone in the pond. It’s saying this needs to happen and this is what we can contribute to this. The root word of reparations is repair and we are heading hopefully into an era of repair. Repairing what has been done to the Black and Indigenous people of this land, and this is a step in the right direction. These types of actions can lead to true systems wide reparations, but for me, it has to become system-wide. Returning land back that was stolen? — Now you’re talking about direct action. You want repair? Give the land back. You stole it. Give it back. This can create the conditions for reparations to happen.

While the call for reparations for Black communities and Land Back for Native communities are forms of restorative and economic justice that are parallel and sometimes intertwined, especially for Black Natives (Mays, 2021), they are largely separate movements that cannot provide a common solution for both communities who want and value different things. Muskogee scholar Daniel R. Wildcat (2014) argues that Native communities are more resistant to reparations in the form of money as that may legally equate to settlement money for stolen land and potentially jeopardize existing land claims. This fear of reparations as legal settlement is not farfetched.

Tuck and Yang (2012) also argue that part of why there is resistance to the decolonization movement is that “decolonization eliminates settler property rights and settler sovereignty. It requires the abolition of land as property and upholds the sovereignty of Native land and people” (pg. 26). However, this also becomes a historical tension point between our communities as “the abolition of slavery often presumes the expansion of settlers who own Native land and life via inclusion of emancipated slaves and prisoners into the settler nation-state. As we have noted, it is no accident that the U.S. government promised 40 acres of Indian land as reparations for plantation slavery” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pg. 29). Of course, the United States government did not make good on that promise to emancipated Black slaves either. This

is just one of the historical complications that these movements must attempt to reconcile while exploring possibilities for solidarity.

NDN Collective hosted a series of webinars held in February 2021 and April 2022<sup>9</sup> to help educate its network about the case for reparations and explain how it is adjacent to the Land Back movement. In 2021, NDN Collective LANDBACK Campaign Director Krystal Two Bulls articulated that reparations from a Native perspective are about repairing that harm. It means returning the land, making amends, and taking responsibility for the harms caused by policies and practices that caused Native Americans to lose their languages, cultures, ceremonies, and spiritual connection to the land. Interestingly, the majority of the panelists put the moral and financial responsibility for reparations on the federal government. While Asante-Muhammad felt that philanthropy has a role to play by funding advocacy and amplifying the call for reparations, it's ultimately our government that crafted and deployed the most harmful policies.

This is consistent with historical arguments made by Darity Jr. and Mullen (2020), which remind us that:

Reparations programs have been used strategically in the United States and throughout the world to provide redress for grievous injustices. These include the U.S. government's provision of reparations for Japanese Americans unjustly incarcerated ("interned") during World War II, the German government's provision of reparations for victims of the Nazi Holocaust, and the Canadian government's provision of compensation to Indigenous peoples who were removed forcibly from their families and confined to Christian, church-run, Indian residential schools (pgs. 1-2).

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<sup>9</sup> The 2022 webinar featured speakers from the Movement 4 Black Lives and provided a set of resources including the Reparations NOW toolkit that describes ways for activists, donors, and foundations to engage with and support the movement more deeply.

While I understand the argument that the United States government should pay reparations for these injustices, it's critical that philanthropy also does some self-reflection and research about how their wealth was built and whether it is connected to stolen land, stolen labor, or extractive resource industries. This has been modeled by leaders like Northwest Area Foundation CEO Kevin Walker when he is explicit about NWAFF's commitment to investing 40% of grant dollars into Native and tribal communities over the past decade. In the case of NWAFF, their wealth comes directly from Louis W. Hill, who is a part of the Hill family that built the Great Northern Railway from the Midwest out to the Pacific Northwest. He writes, "this railroad running through Blackfeet country played a crucial role in opening the Northwest to settlement and economic development – but the railroad's progress was not of, by, or for the Native people whose lands it crossed. For our foundation, therefore, funding in Indian Country is a matter of justice and common sense" (Walker, 2019, pg. 4).

In my view, both the federal government and foundations have built their collective wealth on Native lands and have a moral and financial obligation to make amends for that harm. As we imagine a decolonized future where Native people are able to regain control of their lands and African Americans are able to gain reparations for their stolen labor and work towards Black liberation, we need to have the courage to deconstruct the systems that have perpetuated harm and ensure that we have the adequate resources to heal and (re)build our communities. As I think about our current moment and the racial justice movement that so many of us are fighting for, I'm also trying to think through the intersections between the various movements for Native land and water rights, cultural survival, sovereignty, and the Movement for Black Lives. While our struggles for liberation are not the same, we are bound in

our shared history of having our land and labor stolen in order for white settlers to generate vast amounts of wealth.

The momentum for racial equity within philanthropy is building because the movement for racial justice is growing. In a chapter that analyzes the relationship between Indigenous philanthropy and institutional philanthropy, Carson (1999) argues that the two parts of the field “engage in a tug of war to influence each other’s grantmaking priorities as well as the attitudes of the broader public. It appears that progress on social justice is most likely to occur when foundations support the social justice efforts initiated by culture-specific groups after they have gained sufficient public support” (Carson, 1999, pg. 250). This echoes the “change the narrative” strategy that national Native organization IllumiNative has employed in its work to garner more public support for Native issues. In 2020, it launched a grant cycle called the Rapid Response Art Fund in partnership with the Native American Community Development Institute to fund public Native art installations around Minneapolis. In a statement (IllumiNative, 2020) CEO Crystal Echohawk explained the purpose of these grants:

Artists have always been on the frontlines of social change. Through their work, they call out and shine a light on injustices within our society. They invite and guide us in imagining a world beyond the boundaries of our current systems. The ability of artists to illustrate our pain, hopes and ideas for pathways forward is critical. We are proud to support Native artists as they work to show our strength, solidarity, resilience and collective fight for justice. The time has come for a reckoning in this country that is built upon stolen lands of Native Americans and the stolen bodies and labor of African Americans. We need to both reimagine and build a new way forward to end the systemic racism that has been a driving force in this country for hundreds of years. We believe Native artists can play an important role in helping to advance that dialogue nationally and within their respective communities.

## **Research Questions**

As Afro-Indigenous (Saginaw Chippewa) scholar Kyle T. Mays argues, “Black and Indigenous people need each other. In particular, we need to come together to liberate ourselves, all of us” (2021, pg. 167). Despite the complexities of how Black and Indigenous solidarity might be to fully achieve, I also believe that it’s worth struggling for. I believe that our liberation is intertwined and only truly possible when we work together to recognize and reconcile the painful ways in which this nation intentionally pitted us against one another through settler colonialism and white supremacy. That is the spirit through which I’ve chosen this dissertation topic and identified my research questions:

- How do we reimagine philanthropy as reparations to Native and Black communities from which the wealth of the United States was built upon at their expense through the theft of Native lands and the exploitation of Black labor?
- How might we reclaim philanthropy and re-center not just Native giving in respect, reciprocity, relationships, and communal responsibility, but spread these lessons to institutional philanthropy?

### **Roadmap for this Dissertation**

I invite you (as the reader) to join me in exploring where these research questions will take us. In chapter 2, I journey through time to revisit the history of philanthropy with a particular emphasis on how the origins of the sector have both intertwined with and diverged from the traditional ways that Native American communities have practiced giving since time immemorial. I also trace the emergence of the sub-fields of social justice philanthropy and Native philanthropy and explore how the sector has both supported and failed social movements at crucial moments in time. In chapter 3, I share how I combined Indigenous and

decolonizing methodological frameworks with community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods to design this qualitative study. I draw inspiration from Stó:lō First Nations scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008 & 2019) to infuse this study with examples of “Indigenous storywork”, so that we value the stories of my research participants are seen and valued as significant sources of data. I also explain why we should center the Native values of respect, relationships, responsibility, and reciprocity not just in the ways that we practice philanthropy, but in how we strive to conduct ourselves in research.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are devoted to sharing my research findings. Chapter 4 seeks to answer the question, “What is Native giving?” by sharing my cultural reflections alongside those of my research participants. I argue that: “Giving is more than an act, it’s a way of life for Native people”. Chapter 5 demonstrates how the philanthropy sector is still struggling to understand and implement equity and justice and contrasts that with how Native traditions of giving have always inherently centered equity. Chapter 6 explores the possibilities for allyship and solidarity amid a collective struggle to sustain our commitment to racial justice and decolonization. The chapter also shares some examples of how people and organizations within philanthropy are making a profound difference. The epilogue shares what is possible when we enact these reparative giving frameworks by sharing a beautiful and personal story of Land Back enacted.

### **Intended Contributions to My Communities**

From the onset of this dissertation project, I’ve hoped to contribute to the larger movement for economic justice and reparations for Native and Black communities by not just publishing journal articles, but participating in webinars, conference presentations, and working groups within the Native philanthropy sector. In coordination with other Native Americans

working in the field of philanthropy, we collectively seek to advocate for economic justice in the forms of deeper investments in Indigenous communities and the return of Native land and resources. However, I'd like to extend this work to be a stronger ally to Black professionals working in the field, and in coordination with the Association for Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) by also advocating for just philanthropy and reparations for Black communities. As a long-term goal, I also seek to influence foundations to make sustained and unrestricted commitments to increase giving by releasing the funds held in endowments (the 95% held in foundation endowments) and democratize the grantmaking process by involving those most impacted, to serve not just on grant review committees, but in senior leadership and on the boards of trustees for foundations as well.

Finally, I'd like to contribute to the paucity of literature that grapples with important issues within philanthropy. There is a very small pool of dissertations written on critiques of philanthropy. One focuses on the dynamics of how practitioners of social justice philanthropy navigate definitions of poverty and enact poverty politics while seeking to transform their giving practices (Gordon, 2017). Another documents how young progressives with wealth are aiming to reshape social justice philanthropy by raising their class consciousness and engaging in donor organizing (Wernick, 2009). Yet another dissertation focuses on the relationship between philanthropy and the development of public policy, surveying 500 of the largest private and community foundations to understand how they value stakeholder participation in their decision-making processes (Finchum-Mason, 2022). Lastly, a recent dissertation published by a Pueblo scholar explored how Native women are leading healing efforts in Indigenous communities and provides recommendations for how philanthropy can resource this important

work (Suina, 2023). I believe that through this dissertation, I can further shed light on philanthropy's complex relationship with Native communities in a way that has not yet been studied in the social sciences or education.

## Chapter 2: The History of Philanthropy with/in Native and Black Communities

**Figure 2**

*A potlatch in British Columbia in the 1980s as part of the cultural resurgence movement among Native American and First Nations peoples.*

Note. Jensen, V. & Tierney, J., 2008, *The New York Times*.



### **Reflections on Philanthropy and Native Giving**

While I often struggle to reconcile working in a sector that upholds income inequality through capitalism and settler colonialism, I have been reminded by Native leaders that we can resist and redefine these structures by re-centering ourselves in our own traditions and lived realities. As a new executive director at Potlatch Fund in 2011, I was building a relationship with a regional foundation, Northwest Area Foundation. Since they are based in St. Paul, Minnesota, their program officer invited me to a local convening at the Lummi Nation with three of their

tribal grantees (Candid, 2006). When I arrived, the group was sharing their collective learnings<sup>10</sup> at the halfway point of a ten-year poverty-reduction initiative called the Tribal Ventures project<sup>11</sup>.

During a panel, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Chairman Harold Frazier spoke about their experiences in the first few years of the project, when they were trying to ground this strategy within his tribal community. He told the story of how he went to a group of tribal Elders for their blessing to carry out the work and to ask them to translate the word “poverty” from English into their language. Much to his surprise, they told him that there is no word for poverty in their Lakota dialect. The best translation that they could provide for poverty was “to be without relations”, which they explained would be a rare occurrence – usually reserved only for someone who had been banished from the community. In every other instance, you would be taken care of and provided for by your relatives and your community in times of need—just as you would do for others in times of abundance. That’s just the way that Native people are. This story really resonated with me, and I have retold it many times over the years as a way of explaining just how deeply rooted our Native values of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships are within our Indigenous concepts of philanthropy and community care (Angarova, Francour & Inga, 2021).

Five years later I was also struck by another powerful example that revealed how our traditions of giving were disrupted by colonialism. This time I was part of a planning committee

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<sup>10</sup> These collective learnings (Kauffman & Associates, 2017) can be found at the Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending website at: <https://www.lummicdfi.org/nwaf-tribal-ventures-lummi-cdfi>

<sup>11</sup> Northwest Area Foundation’s Tribal Ventures Project launched in 2004 and regranted \$6 - \$10 million dollars over 2006-2016 to the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and the Lummi Nation.

for a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2021) grantee convening at its Seattle headquarters. Along with Potlatch Fund, the Suquamish Foundation was also in attendance to represent their partnership with the Kitsap Community Fund. Along with the director of the Suquamish Foundation, Robin Sigo, we realized that this gathering provided a unique opportunity for an audience of regional grant makers to hear from Suquamish Tribal Chairman Leonard Forsman during a fireside chat that followed dinner. He reminded us that, historically, Native people were once considered rich, especially in the Pacific Northwest, where people lived with an abundance of natural resources. Instead of thinking of poverty as being synonymous with Native people and their collective identity, we needed to understand it as a modern problem for tribes that directly resulted from being colonized and stripped of their land and resources. Afterwards, questions and comments from the audience demonstrated that they were unsettled by this historical truth.

In both stories, it's clear to me that there is a dire need to help the philanthropy sector understand the connections between where the wealth of the United States came from – including philanthropy – and what it means for the responsibility toward addressing the myriad of devastating impacts to its Indigenous people who have been irreparably harmed by colonization. Tribes should not be experiencing economic poverty when “much of philanthropy’s wealth resulted from profiting from resources that were ceded by tribes or taken by force by colonizers moving onto Indigenous lands” (Philanthropy Northwest, 2020, pg. 1). This alone is justification for dramatically increasing the amount of funding that goes toward supporting Native communities from less than 0.5% to an amount that is just and proportional to our surviving percentage of the population. These stories also help us to understand the

responsibility that philanthropy should feel accountable to and justify restoring wealth back to Native Americans.

### **Framework for this Chapter**

This chapter will provide counter histories of philanthropy in the United States, starting with an acknowledgement that Native Americans have been practicing traditions of giving since our inception. Similarly, African American communities have practiced mutual aid since slavery, through Reconstruction, and into the present to ensure survival. In tracing the divergent histories of philanthropy in this chapter, I will begin to frame the next chapter about the critiques of the philanthropy sector, where I further unpack the embedded philosophies, values, and ways in which power operates through their structures in the forms of eligibility criteria, grant-making policies, types of funding available, and how accountability is defined. This chapter also makes the case that work must be done within the philanthropy sector to radically change its core beliefs and practices so that more money is available to Black and Indigenous communities as a form of reparations and restorative justice.

### **Review of the Literature on the History of Philanthropy**

The history of philanthropy is a surprisingly understudied topic. Given that this is a relatively new area of study within educational scholarship and without sufficient Native and Indigenous perspectives, I draw and supplement from a variety of sources, including books, peer-reviewed academic journals, news articles, trade journals, published and unpublished sector reports, websites, conference presentations, online webinars, and my own experience as a practitioner within the field for more than a decade.

While some have attempted to trace the origin of philanthropy and capture shifting attitudes over centuries, their analysis has been largely Eurocentric. Cunningham (2020) describes three texts including Gray (1905), Jordan (1959), and Owen (1965) that are often described as the cornerstone of the history of philanthropy but since they are exclusively about the history of philanthropy in Britain, they are beyond the scope of this literature review. Instead, I focus on the history of philanthropy here in the United States, including the “hidden histories”<sup>12</sup> of communities of color that have not always been written about by historians (García & Yosso, 2020). However, I will include some of the texts about philanthropy from a Western perspective in order to compare and contrast some of the concepts and values.

Bremner’s 1994 book, *Charity and Philanthropy in History*, is large in scope with chapters beginning in the ancient world, continuing through the Middle Ages and early Modern times, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and concluding with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, he is most interested in documenting changing societal attitudes as evidenced in literary sources. His focus is on understanding “what writers and characters in their works have had to say about giving in general and giving to the poor, beggars, and good causes. The advice and caveats they offer touch on altruism, self-interest, and gentility; they express opinions on religion, politics, social class, tolerance, and censoriousness; among the topics often discussed are sacrifice, pride, display, luxury, work and laziness” (Bremner, 1994, pg. xi).

What this text does offer is insight into European and early American values in which people in need were commonly referred to as “beggars” and dehumanized, pitied, and treated

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<sup>12</sup> The term “hidden histories” has been used by scholars of color to describe the histories of people of color that have been largely left out of dominant accounts of history. For more see: García & Yosso (2020).

in condescending ways that required them have to prove their worth before receiving charity. This does help us to understand over history how philanthropists came to identify as not just wealthy, but as being inherently on a higher moral ground. He also documents how modern philanthropists like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller made distinctions between “philanthropy” and “charity”. Carnegie disparaged traditional charity as a waste of his money going to the “unreclaimably poor” and instead looked to “systematic and scientific methods of distinguishing between deserving and underserving applicants” (Bremner, 1994, pg. 159-160).

Vallely’s more recently published *Philanthropy: From Aristotle to Zuckerberg* spends the first half of the book tracing the history of Western philanthropy so that it can better explain the contemporary debates within the sector in the latter half. In a section on the anthropology of giving, he cites anthropologist Marcel Mauss’s 1923 essay: “gift-giving is a universal phenomenon which manifests itself in many different forms. In all societies, gifts of any kind are signs of status” (2020, pg. 7). However, he also argues that giving is tied to religious practice and the ideal of creating a just society. By providing examples of how giving has long been a part of religious teachings within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Vallely is able to show that we have been asking the same set of questions over thousands of years: “What should we give, how and to whom? How should we prioritize? What is the healthiest relationship between donor and recipient?” (2020, pg. 42).

### **Figure 3**

*Cultural origins of philanthropy in the United States*

Cultural Origins of Philanthropy in the United States <sup>13</sup>	
Early European Settlers	Strong religious beliefs & traditions
Native Americans	Practices of collective hunting, food distribution & potlatches
African Americans	Cultures of mutual assistance & support
Other Settler and Immigrant Communities	Cultures of mutual assistance & support

### ***Pre-Colonial Philanthropy***

The concept of philanthropy – or more accurately the practice of giving – predates the founding of the United States and has been embedded as a practice in Indigenous cultures since time immemorial. In Indigenous cultures, it is the traditional method of redistributing wealth and taking care of community in times of need. Here in the Pacific Northwest, Coast Salish tribes and Canadian First Nations practiced potlatching as a ceremonial way of sharing an abundance of resources. Russian Jewish anthropologist Sergei Kan wrote an extensive ethnography about Tlingit potlatching practices in *Symbolic Immortality* in 1989. While Kan’s analysis of the potlatch ceremony is clouded by his positionality as an outsider and desire to understand how power, competition, and hierarchy are displayed in the rituals, he does make some astute observations:

Despite the importance of feasting and gift giving as major means of expressing and strengthening intermoietty cooperation and reciprocity, their implicit but equally significant functions as the hosts’ instruments of dominating the guests should not be ignored. In Tlingit culture, as in many others, gift giving served not only to establish and reaffirm interpersonal and intergroup ties but was also used to challenge the recipient to reciprocate with an equal or, preferably, larger gift (Kan, 1989, pg. 229).

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from a description of the cultural origins of philanthropy from “History of U.S. Philanthropy” resource guide: <https://philanthropynewyork.org/sites/default/files/resources/History%20of%20Philanthropy.pdf>

While Kan interprets this as “the burden of the gift”, Coast Salish Native people have described this type of generosity as both an honor and a sign of status. Vallely argues that another benefit of the potlatch ceremony is that “the continuous exchange of gifts between individuals creates social order and stability” (2020, pg. 7).

Potlatch Fund, the Native-led foundation that I used to manage, was inspired by this practice, and wanted to honor that by communicating just how deeply held these traditions of Native giving are to our communities. “The name, Potlatch Fund, reflects a Northwest coastal tribal traditional ceremony, and in the Chinook language ‘potlatch’ means to give or a gift. Historically, potlatches were occasions when individuals shared their good fortune through the distribution of gifts to members of their tribes as well as those of neighboring tribes” (Potlatch Fund, 2007, pg. 52).

### ***Philanthropy as a Colonial Institution***

With the arrival of white, European explorers, and the gradual onset of settler colonialism, philanthropy took on a different meaning and became an institution that was employed for the purpose of educating and civilizing Native people. This is similar to what happened to other Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world such as the Aboriginal people in Australia (O’Brien, 2015). As part of the history of education in the United States, Wright documented that, as early as 1617, King James ordered churches in England to take up a special collection of money to send to the colonies “for the education of the children of those Barbarians” (Wright, 1988, pg. 73). However, these donations were never used for that purpose and instead were used to keep the Virginia Company from bankruptcy, with none of the funds going toward “the conversion and education of would-be native scholars.” The result was that

these self-serving colonists “learned, foremost, to manipulate and capitalize on the charitable impulses of the pious English. Their enterprising machinations resulted in the construction of the Harvard Indian College, which advantaged English scholars more than it did the natives for which it was ostensibly intended” (Wright, 1988, pg. 74). There was not a single Indian student who attended this university until 1660, and by the time it was demolished in 1693, only a handful of Native students had actually been educated there despite its name and targeted mission. Let’s not forget that education at this time was not about the empowerment of Native people, but an effort to assimilate and convert them to Christianity. Furthermore, in 1819 the United States Congress established a “Civilization Fund” with the express purpose of assimilating Native Americans (Adamson, 1995).

This is just the beginning of a long and intertwined history of education and philanthropy. In some cases, treaties between Indian nations and the United States government included rights to education and funding for Native students to attend Ivy League colleges. In addition to funding more “Indian education” at colonial institutions like Harvard University, William & Mary College, and Dartmouth, efforts to establish other colleges and universities were aided by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 through the concept of state “land grants” that were originally tied to agricultural purposes (Committee on the Future of Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, 1995). However, we know that this land was and still is Indigenous land. The gift and sale of this stolen land funded the establishment of many land-grant universities which in time became our current system of public universities. The point that I want to emphasize by taking this short historical journey is that colonization and a desire to assimilate and exploit

Native people is baked into the very core of American institutions like education, philanthropy, and our financial systems (Villanueva, 2018).

During this time period, the practice of mutual aid also emerged. Although mutual aid was popularized during the COVID-19 pandemic as a way for individual donors to build solidarity during crisis by assisting other individuals and families with cash donations outside of philanthropy, mutual aid has a long tradition in African American communities during slavery, continuing into the early years of abolishment in Northeastern states in the 1780s (Spade, 2020), and the Reconstruction Era. During that time, Black communities formed mutual aid organizations like the Free African Society of Philadelphia and the African Free School of New York to build community and assist families in need (Jackson, 2023). The Free African Society also was the forerunner to the establishment of the first African American church in Philadelphia. This tradition continued after the Civil War when these societies “not only [aided] in the transition of Blacks from slavery to freedom, but also from farm to factory and from the South to the urban North and West” (Dunbar as cited in Jackson, 2023). Hine (2005) also traces the practice of mutual aid back to African traditions of collectivity and mutual beneficence and argues that this was not only a form of resistance but survival.

### ***Philanthropy's Roots in Racial Capitalism***

In order to understand how philanthropy began in the United States in the early colonial era, we also need to understand how it is rooted of our economic system of capitalism. I begin with the premise that philanthropy is complicit with racial capitalism. Racial capitalism is the theory that capitalism has always been inherently entangled with race, specifically in the ways that capitalism has historically relied upon the extraction of labor from racialized identities to

further itself. Racial capitalism was first written about by Cedric Robinson in the 1983 book, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*<sup>14</sup>. He describes how the Marxist Western structure has failed to adequately describe the experiences of Black people's resistance to slavery. Robinson argues that this experience can only be understood by expanding the timeline of Black history into Africa, considering both Black peoples' experiences in Europe and incorporating the tradition of Black radicalism. However, other scholars (Jenkins & Leroy, 2021; Koshy et al., 2022) have argued that Robinson did not invent the term in 1983, as it had already been used to describe the struggle for freedom from apartheid and white supremacy in 1970s South Africa. Nonetheless, it remains a critically important concept in understanding how capitalism and racism have been intertwined from the beginning of United States history.

In a recent social media post, Native Americans in Philanthropy (2024) further unpacks this term to show how philanthropy upholds racial capitalism: "Fundors may be investing with wealth that was obtained at the expense of Black people, Native Peoples, or other marginalized communities. Fundors may also hold the incorrect idea that they know what's best for communities they have no part in". This is the part of history that contemporary philanthropists are often blind to as they associate philanthropy only with the creation of the modern sector. They forget that "here in the United States, colonists built institutions from slave labor, stole Native lands and pushed Native peoples to the margins, created wealth off of stolen resources, and then amassed greater fortune by investing these dollars. This wealth launched the first

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<sup>14</sup> Within this dissertation, I've cited the updated 2020 version of *Black Marxism* with commentary from other contemporary Black scholars.

formal foundations at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we continue to see the effects of colonialism in philanthropy today” (Philanthropy Northwest, 2020, pg. 3). A full chronology of colonization and its relation to philanthropy has been documented by Dr. Karina Walters, from the University of Washington’s Indigenous Wellness Research Institute (2022).

### ***Establishment of Modern Institutional Philanthropy***

The formal establishment of the philanthropic sector happened in 1913 with the creation of the Rockefeller Foundation. In a desire to offset the burden of his vast fortune by creating a tax shelter, billionaire John D. Rockefeller went on a four-year quest to establish the first general purpose foundation in 1909. His team pursued an act of Congress, but when too many politicians voiced concerns about the potential abuse of power a foundation might yield, Rockefeller eventually incorporated under the State of New York. This story is well-documented in many sources, but scholar Rob Reich (2018) tells it in much richer detail and attention paid to the legal and ethical challenges that Rockefeller had to overcome.

Vallely devotes an entire chapter of his book to describing what he deems the “Golden Age of Philanthropy”, which includes stories about Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, who were among a group of billionaire businessmen who applied cut-throat capitalist practices to how they shaped the philanthropy sector. He writes:

Carnegie was not alone. He was one of a coterie of industrial and financial titans which included Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew W. Mellon, Russell Sage, Henry Clay Frick, Jay Gould, J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford. Their admirers called them ‘captains of industry’ but their detractors accused them of unscrupulous and underhand behavior, manipulating stocks, insider trading, and bribing judges and politicians. They all made money out of the American Civil War...In 1867 the journalist E.L. Godkin coined the term ‘robber barons’ for this new generation of businessmen (Vallely, 2020, pg. 337).

This history of the “robber barons” also helps us to better understand the inherent dichotomy of philanthrocapitalism. Bishop (2006) first used the term “philanthrocapitalism” in an article about “The Business of Giving” in *The Economist* to describe how a new wave of philanthropists are trying to incorporate elements of the business sector into philanthropy to make it more corporate, productive, and technological. However, they failed to understand how employing capitalist tools did not necessarily improve philanthropy and may replicate the harm. Bishop and Green (2008) have expanded on “philanthrocapitalism” to describe both the historical and recent phenomenon of individuals who have become massively wealthy in capitalist systems and are now applying the very same skills and techniques that they used to create their wealth to the project of giving their fortunes away. This assumption that people who have been successful in building wealth are positioned to be the best at giving away wealth and solving complex societal issues is problematic as it fails to recognize that massive wealth is often acquired in ways that are predatory and contribute to systemic inequality – which is the root cause of many of the same issues they are trying to solve.

An example of how this imbalance of power and wealth leads toward predatory practices is how the philanthropy sector shields its assets from contributing to the tax base of the United States (Duquette, 2019). In his article, “Founders’ Fortunes and Philanthropy”, Duquette (2019) writes about how the United States IRS tax code has both expanded and rewarded philanthropy by encouraging ordinary taxpayers and the wealthy to utilize the charitable contribution deduction. However, by empowering donors to decide where their money goes, there is less tax money to help fund infrastructure, education, social programs, and other complex social needs.

Building off this history and analysis, Reich's book, *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy & How It Can Do Better*, further documents how the growth of the philanthropy sector has exploded from 200 private foundations with assets of less than \$1 billion dollars in 1930 to nearly 100,000 private foundations with combined assets of \$800 billion dollars in 2014. One of Reich's main critiques is about the vast power that wealthy philanthropists yield as they deploy their private resources toward solving public problems and changing public policy, while also benefitting from the ability to further shield their wealth from taxation. "In the United States and elsewhere, big philanthropy is often an unaccountable, nontransparent, donor-directed, and perpetual exercise of power" (Reich, 2018, pg. 7).

### ***The Politics of Philanthropy***

Along with providing a history of institutional philanthropy and contextualizing the current sector, Reich (2018) aims to develop a political theory of philanthropy that asks questions about the public morality of giving (as an organized social practice) rather than examining philanthropy through the lens of private giving (as an individual act) and as a question of morality. Two of the central questions he poses are: What is the role of philanthropy in a liberal democratic society<sup>15</sup>? What role should philanthropy play? These are questions that aren't easily resolved and are a source for rich debate. Reich's main support for the case for maintaining foundations is that: 1) they contribute to a pluralism of the marketplace of diverse solutions and a decentralization of the role of government; 2) they can fund innovation by being willing to provide "risk capital" for discovery and experimentation.

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<sup>15</sup> For a deeper dive into philanthropy and American politics, please see Chapter 15 of Valley (2020), which chronicles the relationships between the philanthropy sector and prominent donors and politicians like George Soros, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the Koch Brothers, and Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Lastly, Reich ends the book by posing a question about whether philanthropy can be “a transfer of private wealth from one generation to the public interests of future generations and as a vehicle to support intergenerational justice” (pg. 170). While this idea intrigued me because it made me think of Resource Generation’s mission to help donor activists to move their inherited wealth into socially just giving, I think that Reich is more concerned with the taxation issues and philosophical questions than models of how to move resources from an older generation to a more progressive one.

In Anand Giridharadas’s *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (2018), his central premise is that members of the elite wealthy class are using the mechanism of philanthropy and a false commitment to social change to distract us from the fact that they are stealing from the public by not paying a fair share of taxes, and are maintaining the status quo to protect the system of capitalism and their resulting status and power. He also asks questions like: “Should the world’s gravest problems be solved by unelected elites rather than the public institutions they erode by lobbying and dodging taxes? How do those who commit injustice – like the [Sackler] family who helped seed the opioid crisis – use generosity to cover it up?”

One of his most riveting chapters explores the tensions and contradictions that Ford Foundation CEO Darren Walker confronts in his role as one of the first Black foundation leaders, and the cognitive dissonance he experiences between his privilege and his impoverished upbringing. In Walker’s 2015 annual letter, “Toward a New Gospel of Wealth”, he argued that society must have a say not only in what happens to great wealth, but also in how great wealth comes to be. This was a direct challenge to Andrew Carnegie’s 1889 “Gospel of Wealth” essay,

which is referenced in many of the books and articles I've read as being the "intellectual charter of modern philanthropy" (Walker as cited in Giridharadas, 2018, pg. 171). Walker challenges this premise as being problematic because it justifies extreme economic inequity as being an unavoidable byproduct of capitalism and thus positions philanthropy as the remedy to the problem. This is also an example of how foundation leadership can take risks to challenge the structure of inequality and its disproportionate impact on BIPOC communities. Lastly, Walker left his audience of privileged philanthropists with this question: "How does our privilege insulate us from engaging with the most difficult root causes of inequality and the poverty in which it ensnares people?"

While Reich and Giridharadas help us to understand some of the history, core philosophical stances, and privilege that undergird the institution of philanthropy, we are also interested in understanding the complex power dynamics embedded in institutional philanthropy. This is best understood by demonstrating many of the critiques of the philanthropy sector that led to the emergence of a new form of philanthropy that aims to explicitly center race and social justice causes and embody its values in its operating practices.

### ***The Emergence of Social Justice Philanthropy***

Among those driving the new action are funder affinity groups, which are promoting new philanthropic models that aim to accelerate social change. Working with vanguard foundations, they are pushing for a restructuring of grantmaking to emphasize more movement building and to promote intersectionality—the idea that different forms of discrimination and disadvantage combine, intersect or overlap in many ways. Most of all, they are focusing on power—how to get, share, use and leverage it—to achieve such goals as a more equitable form of capitalism and dismantling structural racism (Lief, 2020).

While I've long been an ally and co-conspirator of social justice philanthropy, I did need to immerse myself in books and resources on this area of the field, which is distinctly different

from mainstream institutional philanthropy. It is the umbrella under which many identity-based affinity groups organize and enact principles to share power, name and destabilize privilege, and align with the progressive political movement.

While I had heard of the Funding Exchange (1979-2012), I knew little about its origin story within the Pillsbury family and how their family and network of donors went on to establish other social justice foundations like the Haymarket People's Fund in Boston in 1974 and Liberty Hill Foundation in Los Angeles in 1976. George Pillsbury was inspired by the creation of the Vanguard Foundation in San Francisco in 1971 by Obie Benz, who had seeded the foundation using his inheritance from the family's fortune made from the Sunbeam Bread company (Lurie, 2016). In a retrospective account of the Funding Exchange, the author describes it as "a new approach to philanthropy that reflected the political ideals of its founders: wealthy young activists who had a 'change, not charity' vision of how they felt their money could make a difference" (Lurie, 2016, pg. 7). The author ascribed the development of their progressive ideals as being rooted in "a generation of young people who participated in the major struggles of the time: the Civil Rights movement, the movement against the Vietnam War, the women's movement, and the early anti-poverty organizing efforts in urban and rural communities" (Lurie, 2016, pg. 8).

One of the ways that the Funding Exchange distinguished itself from other foundations was to intentionally shift the power dynamics of traditional grantmaking by giving up control over the decision making. George Pillsbury reflected on how they arrived at this decision: "We couldn't move forward with social change philanthropy and have the donors make all of the decisions... We felt that if you're going to be involved in social change, then part of that is

building power and leadership, so it was important to involve community activists in the process itself” (Lurie, 2016, pg. 11). He also felt that community activists were more knowledgeable about where and how to provide support to the movement. At that time, this approach was considered radical, but over time participatory grantmaking has become more widely adopted for the same reasons that Pillsbury articulated.

One of the few peer-reviewed journal articles that I found on the emergence of social justice philanthropy argues that this is a model for foundations to make riskier investments in movement building (Suárez, 2012). The author also traces some of the history of institutional philanthropy and its reforms in the 1950s and 1960s – including the 1969 Tax Reform Act – which set most of the current standards that foundations adhere to today, including the rule that foundations can only pay out 5% of their endowment. Suárez mainly focuses on explaining the term social justice philanthropy or funding social change as a way in which “these institutional entrepreneurs seek to transform practice and the field of philanthropy itself by challenging conventional logics with their discourse” (Suárez, 2012, pg. 260). One of the hypotheses in this study was that “rather than drawing attention by embracing the terminology of social justice, private foundations might choose to manifest their support in a less obvious manner” than making it an explicit program goal. This article reminded me of some of the tensions named in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, which are described as efforts by foundations to temper the movement with smaller bits of funding rather than making major investments to fund efforts to dismantle the system, including the root of economic inequality: capitalism.

### ***The Precarious Relationship Between Philanthropy and Social Movements***

While *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* is mainly a critique of institutional philanthropy, it does name many of the problems that are embedded in the field and that social justice philanthropy aimed to solve. It is a book that many of my friends and colleagues in the field of social justice philanthropy have both recommended and frequently cited. While there were plenty of chapters to read, I focused on four in particular: "Introduction" (Smith, 2007), which provided a historical overview of institutional philanthropy, and "The Filth on Philanthropy" (Lethabo King & Osayande, 2007), which argues that philanthropy intentionally maintains a racial hierarchy to thwart social justice movements and uses people of color to maintain the status quo. "Between Radical Theory & Community Praxis" (Pérez, 2007) illustrates how the 501(c)3 structure diverts energy away from the work of community organizing and toward running a nonprofit like a business. In "Native Organizing Before the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," (Thunder Hawk, 2007) a former AIM and WARN veteran shares her reflections on how the influx of foundation dollars and pressure to fundraise have co-opted the movement away from the call for radical change toward the professionalization of the sector and a watering down of activism. These chapters gave me a lot to think about and left me feeling unsettled about my own understanding and experiences within the field. One of the quotes that left me reeling was: "the model is obsessed with institution building rather than organizing; and it forces social justice activists to become more accountable to funders than to our communities" (Bhattacharjee's 2004 conference speech as cited in King & Osayande, 2007, pg. 83). I'm still unpacking the layers of truth in that statement and the ways in which all these authors' arguments rang true with my own observations in the field.

In Ferguson's book, *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism*, she makes the case that Ford Foundation President McGeorge Bundy "played a pivotal role in establishing many of the hallmark legacies of the black power era, such as ghetto-based economic development initiatives, university black studies programs, multicultural and 'affective' school curricula, and race-specific arts and cultural organizations" (Ferguson, 2013, pg. 1). During the years of 1965-1970, the Ford Foundation heavily invested in Black communities by increasing their investments from 2.5% to 40% as part of their "social development" strategy.

While the foundation had previously supported the Black freedom struggle, they pulled back their support in the mid-1950's. However, the Ford Foundation saw an opportunity to leverage some of the wins from the Civil Rights movement and also to recognize the limitations of some of those wins. Ferguson describes their decision to re-engage:

The Foundation's trustees and officers, compelled by their animating beliefs, sought to regain the ground they had lost in this field, not by funding the Southern civil rights movement, but by supporting systems reforms from above that would resolve racial conflict, achieve equal opportunity, and restore the nation's equilibrium, particularly in American cities outside of the South. The ongoing emergence of a visible and vocal black public made clear the inequities faced by African American communities throughout the nation, which were a stark exception to the aggregate upward mobility of the period (2013, pg. 50).

Ferguson's book is an incredibly rich history of this time period and cites internal documents and materials from the Ford Foundation's archives. Within it, she details the unequal and frequently complicated relationships between the foundation and Black activists and organizations. However, in the epilogue, she writes, "the social mobility produced by strategies like the Ford Foundation's has not erased economic inequality but has only made minor changes to its complexion in an era of growing polarization between rich and poor" (pg. 267).

Wimpee (2020) also writes about the complicated relationship between Ford Foundation and social movements. She writes: “For a variety of reasons, the Ford Foundation in the 1960s similarly favored activities in education and research. Ford shied away from direct social action. Eventually and for a variety of reasons, Ford would throw its millions to support legal strategies, shifting to litigation and the enforcement of laws already on the books”. During that time period of 1965-1970, Ford Foundation made annual grants awards to six civil rights organizations: National Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Southern Regional Council, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Wimpee, 2020).

Ford’s decision to invest in self-determination strategies for Black communities is consistent with how they funded Native communities. The Ford Foundation seeded important Native American nonprofit organizations like the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) in the 1970s and the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF) in 2009. Zimmer (2019) argues<sup>16</sup> that by “providing early support and mentoring, and by enabling Native leadership to lead and propel NARF’s mission forward, the Ford Foundation helped support tribal sovereignty and self-determination”. NARF has been continuously funded by Ford over the past 50 years. In 2009, Ford Foundation provided Native Arts and Cultures Foundation with an initial \$10 million dollar endowment. Over the past 15 years, NACF has been instrumental in building a much-needed infrastructure to the Native arts ecosystem by supporting leadership development and

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<sup>16</sup> Zimmer’s 2019 paper is cited in a Vantage Point History blog post written by staff member Eabraha: <https://vantagepointhistory.com/zimmer-presents-paper-on-history-of-the-ford-foundation-and-native-american-rights-fund/>

providing larger-sized grants that can help sustain Native artists and arts institutions (Pogrebin, 2009).

### ***Foundations are Experimenting with New Ways of Giving by Ceding Power***

A recent trade article highlights how the field is beginning to seriously consider the concepts of “decolonizing” their wealth, making reparations for African Americans following the racial reckoning of 2020, and greater overall support for social justice causes (Welch, 2021). Citing the work underway with the Justice Funders (including California Endowment and Marguerite Casey Foundation), Welch describes how foundations “are looking at how they accumulated wealth and power and starting to take steps to right wrongs through efforts such as making bolder investments in Black-led organizations. They are looking at how do you turn decisions about distributing that wealth over to those communities of people who have been historically exploited or marginalized” (Welch, 2021, pg. 4). This echoes a key recommendation that social justice philanthropists have been making for the past few decades: employ participatory grantmaking processes in which those who are most impacted become the decision makers.

In a series of articles from *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, I read about how a growing number of foundations are creating pooled funds and community-led grantmaking processes with participation from those most impacted by racial inequality (Daniels, 2021). Examples include the California Black Freedom Fund (with a goal of \$100 million to support Black-led organizations in making policy change), the Families and Workers Fund (with a goal of \$30 million for direct relief & policy change), the Democracy Reinvestment Fund (with a goal of pooling corporate support for strengthening the democratic process following the U.S. Capitol

breach), and the Movement for Black Lives (which challenged foundations and donors with \$50 million dollar goal).

One of the newest pooled funds, Solidaire Network's Black Liberation (estimated at \$20.8 million raised including a \$20 million dollar pledge from the Packard Foundation) started off as a spreadsheet of past grantees, or a "Black liberation ecosystem", that was being circulated at a time when other funders were looking to invest in Black-led organizations. In 2021, the Bush Foundation in Minnesota announced a \$100 million dollar funding commitment, and the Seattle-based Satterberg Foundation announced a \$50 million over 10-year funding commitment – both to benefit Indigenous and Black-led organizations.

Another article identified the ways in which philanthropy is beginning to take more risks despite all the legitimate and perceived reasons that boards, financial and legal advisers, CEOs, and associations are afraid to jeopardize their assets, reputations, power, and privilege. However, none of those risks measure up to "the risks marginalized communities face every day just trying to get by, and the risks they face when they try to speak truth to power" (Ranghelli, 2018, pg. 47). The article does provide some inspiring examples of how foundations are stepping up by: 1) participating in the Divest/Invest Movement by making commitments to divest their endowments from stocks in companies that further damage the environment (ex. oil pipelines); 2) expanding the participatory grant-making process to involve more people directly impacted and building more trusting relationships with grantees by revising grantmaking policies; 3) focusing on regional grantmaking with an emphasis on investing in leadership development and building power among grassroots community organizers; 4) using their privilege and voice to challenge inequities and systemic racism.

The last article I read from *Chronicle of Philanthropy* was “White Philanthropy, Here’s How to Guarantee Real Change Happens” (Villanueva & Daniel, 2021). This was a follow-up article to an online conversation on #PhilanthropySoWhite held in February 2021 that brought together an audience of 6,000 grant makers and has been viewed on YouTube more than 9,000 times. The discussion was an honest assessment of the ways in which institutional philanthropy enacts harm, especially against BIPOC people, while claiming to help them under the “pretense of best practices and operating procedures”. Some of the key strategies offered for how white people in the field can support change are: 1) use power and influence for the good of people of color; 2) work rigorously for racial justice for the long haul; 3) relinquish control; 4) recognize the difference between influence, representation, and power; 5) move more money to organizations run by people of color (pg. 5).

In closing, Villanueva and Daniel issued the following challenge: “If grant makers really want to be anti-racist, they need to be willing to relinquish control of money. They should put their wealth into the control of organizations led by people of color, including wealth-management companies, grassroots organizations with the power to redistribute funds or invest them in land, property, or for-profit endeavors geared to create diverse and evergreen revenue streams for movements” (2021, pg. 6). This is a powerful challenge to the sector that has the opportunity during this time of immense crisis and inequality to show up and be accountable to the communities it has harmed the most.

In the Pacific Northwest, social justice funding has been the jurisdiction of foundations like Social Justice Fund Northwest (SJF). I’m very familiar with SFJ because I’ve been a long-time donor, board member, and participant in the Next Generation and Environmental Justice (2017)

giving circles over the past 15 years. SJF was formed by a collective of mostly white affluent donors in the late 1970s. While I was gifted a copy of the book, *Goodmoney Collective: A Chronicle of ATR*, by author Alan Rabinowitz, a few years before he passed, I'm embarrassed to admit this was the first time I read the book cover-to-cover. As a former SJF board member, I should have taken the time to read about its original formation as A Territory Resource (ATR). I'm sad that I didn't read it earlier as there are questions that I would have liked to have asked Alan: as ATR emerged as a socially progressive grant maker and made some of its earliest grants to Native organizations, how did it see its work in relation to the tribes? Why wasn't Potlatch Fund mentioned in this chronology of how ATR became Social Justice Fund and then inspired staff member Andrea Alexander to form a Native-led foundation?

I'm surprised by the lack of inclusion of Native philanthropy in this book because Alan and his wife Andrea were some of Potlatch Fund's earliest funders and continued to give to us for over a decade. In reading through the appendix, I also realized that many of the original founders, board members, and staff were also shared donors of ours. It was still very helpful to retrace this history that I had only heard about from other SJF staff and board members and to make the connections to how ATR also founded Western States Center and had early connections to McKenzie River Gathering (now known as Seeding Justice) in Oregon. However, as we will see in the next section, while the social justice philanthropy sector can serve as an ally to Native philanthropy, its purpose, mission, and politics are not radical enough to achieve the aims of Native-led movements like Land Back, Idle No More, or Standing Rock.

***Coming Full Circle: Uplifting Native American Philanthropy***

In a webinar on Indigenizing philanthropy, Gaby Strong, NDN Collective Director of Grantmaking, shared this sentiment: “Institutional philanthropy remains a bastion of white supremacy as decisions about how to redistribute wealth are still made by whites” (Strong et al., 2020). In contrast to the astounding amounts of wealth concentrated in institutional and social justice philanthropy, the sector of Native philanthropy is still struggling as much as it was when it was formalized in 1989 to get an equitable and just share of the resources.

Despite being the original philanthropists of this country, Native American communities and issues continue to be chronically underfunded at an average of 0.4% (and range of 0.2-0.6% from 2002-2016) of all foundation giving. This equates to \$224 million dollars in grant dollars awarded to organizations benefitting Native Americans and other ethnic/racial groups and only \$133 million of that figure devoted to organizations exclusively benefitting Native Americans (Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy & CANDID, 2019, pg. 15). In addition, the data set compiled by Candid revealed that of the giving to Native communities and issues, it is done by only 20% of the foundations in the United States. The top 5 funders are: 1) W.K. Kellogg Foundation; 2) NoVo Foundation; 3) Margaret A. Cargill Foundation; 4) Bush Foundation; 5) Northwest Area Foundation (pg. 17).

As an advocate and professional in the field, this particular fact frustrated me beyond belief. As our small group of Native foundations celebrated bringing a new funder into the fold, we would often lose another as their foundation shifted its priorities or focus in the same short time span. For the foundations that didn't fund us, their program officers apologized that they didn't have a Native American portfolio, so they didn't see any opportunity for alignment. My

response to that particular vexing issue was that Native Americans fit into every major portfolio goal, especially if they want to achieve equity.

This stark disparity in foundation support was why Native-led foundations were established. Beginning with Seventh Generation Fund (1977), First Nations Development Institute (1980), Native Americans in Philanthropy (1989), Potlatch Fund (2002), NDN Collective (2018), Decolonizing Wealth Project (2018), and other Native-led foundations were created with the collective mission of gaining a larger share of philanthropic resources and creating greater understanding and visibility of Native issues. Across the decades since the sector of Native philanthropy was created, the ebb and flow of funding has not been the only frustrating challenge. Funders often shift their thinking about the purpose and the restrictions of their funding.

To speak to this trend over time, I came across a 1995 article by Rebecca Adamson, former president of First Nations Development Institute, titled “Money with a Mission: A History of Indian Philanthropy,” which outlines different Indian philanthropic eras: 1) missionary and chief making; 2) political leadership era; 3) the issues and rights era; 4) the institutional era; 5) the self-sufficiency era; and 6) present-day Indian philanthropy. In the shift between the issues and rights era of the 1960s and the institution-building strategies on the 1970s, Ford Foundation was a leader in funding Native American demonstration schools in partnership with tribal nations and then shifted to funding to creation of Native organizations like the Native American Rights Fund. “It was a watershed in philanthropy, as foundations recognized the need for Indian-controlled institutions. Ironically, as foundations recognized the need for Indian institutions, they became diverted from the targeted, community-specific

demonstration funding” (Adamson, 1995, pg. 26). In summary, she writes, “What has philanthropy learned about Native American grant-making that can be as catalytic as the ‘60s? As institution-building as the ‘70s? And as ‘cost effective’ as the ‘80s? There is a desperate need for the demonstration dollars. These dollars need to be directed to the community to support Indigenous efforts and to empower this voice” (Adamson, 1995, pg. 26).

Similar to Adamson’s argument that philanthropy has shifted its support over time and sometimes in response to Native activism, Canon’s (1999) chapter argues that Indigenous and institutional philanthropy have different roles in advancing social justice. While tracing the legacy of philanthropic investments among all communities of color, Canon reminds us that large foundations like Ford Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation began supporting Native causes in the 1970s but were influenced to shift their funding when the American Indian Movement became too “radical” and the familiar story that their internal funding priorities had changed. This is the space that Native foundations can take up: funding our own priorities, issues, and movements when it feels too risky for other foundations to directly engage. This is also in part why I’m personally an advocate for Native foundations to play an “intermediary” role where institutional foundations and donors pool their resources and trust us to have the relationships, reputation, and respectful engagement with tribes, Native communities, and grassroots movements to move the money to where it is needed most.

### ***Re-Building Indigenous Power Through Reparative Giving***

While I have plenty to say about the Native philanthropy field and want to share appreciations for each of the Native-led foundations and their commitment to Native

sovereignty that is embedded in their missions and grantmaking strategies, I do want to highlight the work of the newest national Native foundation to emerge in 2018: NDN Collective. Many of these insights are from a series on “Building Indigenous Power,” written by NDN Collective staff members Nick Tilsen (January 2021) and Gaby Strong (March 2021) and published in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Tilsen’s article encouraged funders to invest in Indigenous self-determination and build power as a means to support the existing Indigenous rights movement and community-driven solutions that are already underway. He cites NDN Collective and other Native-led mutual aid networks as leading the COVID-19 response within Native communities, largely because there was serious doubt that the federal government would respond in a timely way with money and supplies. Instead, they raised and distributed \$10 million dollars to Native communities in nine months<sup>17</sup>. He argues that NDN Collective’s success is rooted in “working from our own theory of change, and because we’re giving the folks who have invested in us the chance to be part of our liberation. Our funders are not resourcing their ideas of what our work should look like; they’re making our innovation and creativity possible, as well as paying reparations for the hundreds of years of genocide we’ve faced” (Tilsen, 2021, pg. 5). The racial reckoning and process of repair for Native people will not be complete unless it involves decolonizing the land as demanded by the #LandBack movement and “dismantling the white supremacy that allowed our land to be stolen in the first place” (2021, pg. 6).

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<sup>17</sup> Also see examples like the Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief that raised \$7.3 million as of April 13, 2021 for grassroots mutual aid: <https://navajohopisolidarity.org>

Strong argues that while white allies are important to NDN Collective's work, they are more centered in developing their own Indigenous power, leadership, and decision-making than relying on institutional philanthropy to reform itself. She also cites Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth" essay as the root of philanthropy's power structure that empowers wealthy white donors to make key decisions on how to solve complex social problems that they are not directly impacted by. She makes the excellent point that "the financial wealth upon which institutional philanthropy is built is drawn from the exploitation and marginalization of the lands, resources, and bodies of Indigenous people and other people of color" (2021, pg. 3). Strong makes that point more explicitly by referencing the Dawes Act (also known as the General Allotment Act of 1887) as the policy that allowed for 90 million acres of Indian land and resources to be stolen. Philanthropy has yet to fully reconcile where its wealth came from and to understand that "the entire system of wealth was built from Indigenous assets, whose non-Indigenous beneficiaries now make decisions on what is appropriate and necessary for our communities' prosperity. That is the definition of white privilege" (2021, pg. 3). Among NDN Collective's core programs are: 1) organizing, policy, and advocacy; 2) grantmaking; 3) lending and impact investing; 4) community development and social enterprise; 5) narrative and communications work. Their foundation's grantmaking is aligned with the values of defend, develop, and decolonize, and they measure their success around whether they are promoting greater financial power, social power, and political power.

In their 2023 impact report, *Building Indigenous Power: A Retrospective of NDN Collective's First Five Years*, NDN Collective described how they have raised \$170 million dollars from the following funding sources: 320 institutional funders have granted \$117,958,750 and

72 donor-advised funds have contributed \$7,210,315 whereas 90,138 individual donors have given \$4,737,742. They have also received support from two tribes in the amount of \$357,012 and one federal grant in the amount of \$148,000. While the majority of funding may be coming from non-Native sources, NDN Collective is clear about their advancement strategy and values:

As a construct of white supremacy, philanthropy provides less than 0.5% of its funding to Indigenous Peoples. NDN Collective disrupts this reality by advocating for the liberation and repatriation of resources that have been stolen by institutional philanthropy over centuries through extractive industry, government policymaking, and church and military campaigns. We only collaborate with philanthropy partners who recognize that redistribution of resources is a vital part of shifting power and decision-making... all of our funding has to match our theory of change; we do not deliver services or programming for another entity or another theory of change as we are not an extension of the field of philanthropy. As a last point NDN Collective is not an intermediary funder. We are an organization built to fund and support the power of Indigenous communities (2023, pg. 89).

As NDN Collective board member, and Decolonizing Wealth Project CEO, Edgar Villanueva has advocated in his book, *Decolonizing Wealth*, we need a radical shift away from philanthropy as a colonizing and harmful institution upheld by white supremacy and toward creating healing spaces where we are deliberately funding those most impacted by racism and settler colonization and with BIPOC leaders as powerful decision makers. “There needs to be total transparency around where our assets are invested and those assets must be 100 percent mission-aligned, meaning not just do-no-harm but invested in decolonization, in order to heal divides and restore balance” (Villanueva, 2018, pg. 157). I often think about what our Black and Indigenous communities could have been if our land and wealth were still intact. A quote posted by a Native woman and friend reminded me of this concept that “healing yourself is generational wealth”. We must consider the ways in which we can repair that intergenerational

trauma for our children, communities, and future selves. Reparative giving is a crucial step forward in repairing the harms of the past 532 years.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to help us understand the history of philanthropy and the ways in which it has been enacted over past centuries. By reclaiming “philanthropy” as part of the Native tradition of giving, we can expand its meaning far beyond what it has become: a sector that was founded a century ago as a tax shelter and thus became extension of the same types of business practices that helped billionaires like John D. Rockefeller to maintain their wealth. Instead, we can see philanthropy as a way in which people have practiced communal responsibility and care.

Over time, subfields of philanthropy, like social justice philanthropy and Native philanthropy, emerged and began to critique institutional philanthropy by tying the origins of wealth to our present racial wealth gap. At this juncture, the field is considering reparative giving frameworks that could restore wealth and land back to Black and Native communities as a way to heal and repair centuries of harm, exploitation, and extraction from slavery and settler colonialism. This selective review of the literature on philanthropy also adds background context and language for the findings chapters, where we will further unpack what Native giving means, grapple with critiques of the philanthropy sector, and then explore some possibilities for solidarity as we reimagine what philanthropy could be like if we centered racial justice.

### **Chapter 3: Enacting Respect, Relationships, Responsibility, and Reciprocity as Methodology**

I began this research study out of a desire to better understand my own experiences in the philanthropy sector, and to offer some thought leadership within the spaces I locate myself within community<sup>18</sup>. My research questions are:

- How do we reimagine philanthropy as reparations to Native and Black communities, at whose expense the wealth of the United States was built upon through the theft of Native lands and the exploitation of Black labor?
- How might we reclaim philanthropy and re-center not just Native giving in respect, reciprocity, relationships, and communal responsibility, but spread these lessons to institutional philanthropy?

In order to explore these questions, I re-immersed myself in critical theory with a particular interest in thinking about how Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks could help frame this collection of stories and testimony that reveal where we are in this particular moment of healing and reconciling, with our histories of genocide and slavery. I was particularly interested in revealing how stories are data and the practices of relationality and storying are integral to how Indigenous researchers take up this work. In partnership and consultation with Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP), I designed a qualitative study that blended decolonizing and Indigenous approaches to methodology with community-based participatory research methods (CBPR).

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<sup>18</sup> Here I am referring to community in an expansive sense and inclusive of the multiple spaces I inhabit: as a community member in Seattle's urban Indian community and my home community of Payahuunadü, as a colleague to partners in the field of philanthropy, and as a researcher and academic.

Some of the additional methods I used were autoethnography participant observation, semi-structured interviews, including some dialogical interviewing, and document analysis. My choice of using autoethnography, a method I learned while taking a course on critical approaches to ethnography, helped me to frame and include my past and current experiences as a professional in the philanthropy sector into the analysis. In this way, I was both a researcher and a participant who could offer insight. Moreover, through the process of writing about my experiences, I was able to better understand them in relation to the dynamics in the sector. For my use of autoethnography, I draw from the definitions outlined by Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011) and the ethical considerations proposed by Lapadat (2017). Autoethnography can be summarized as:

As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. When writing an autobiography, an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences. Usually, the author does not live through these experiences solely to make them part of a published document; rather, these experiences are assembled using hindsight... Most often, autobiographers write about 'epiphanies' – remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011, pg. 3).

I used this method to recount times in my professional career where I had epiphanies about either my deepening understanding of my role in philanthropy or my attempts to make sense of the divergent cultures at play within the sector. I also took time to research as much as I could about the dates and context that these events took place, so I could ensure as much detail and accuracy as possible.

### **Positionality**

At the beginning of this research, I had conceptualized a very different study. I was feeling both overly ambitious and a bit naïve and thought that I could also study how Tribal

language revitalization programs seek their funding. While feedback from my committee encouraged me to narrow the scope to focusing solely on understanding philanthropy, they also nudged me to think carefully about my own positionality as a researcher. In many ways, I am the right person at the right time to do this study because of my past and current lived experiences, and my training as an academic researcher. I should stress that even though this is my first formal research study on the topic of philanthropy and education, I have been thinking about, writing about, and presenting on panels within the Native philanthropic sector for over a decade, including my time at Potlatch Fund.

I've been fortunate to gain a wealth of knowledge from years of service on boards, advisory committees, and grant review panels. I've served on the boards for Social Justice Fund Northwest, Native Americans in Philanthropy, American Indian Graduate Center, and 501 Commons. I've served on stakeholder and advisory committees for Common Counsel Foundation, Seattle Foundation, Philanthropy Northwest, and United Way of King County's Urban Native Advisory Committee. I have also served as a grant review panelist or community reviewer for Social Justice Fund Northwest, National Endowment of the Arts, Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning, Native Voices Rising<sup>19</sup>, and the Washington Equity Relief Fund for Nonprofits as a fund administered by Philanthropy Northwest and the Washington State Department of Commerce. Finally, I was interviewed and cited in the seminal book, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, written by fellow Native Americans in Philanthropy board member Edgar Villanueva (2018). In all these

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<sup>19</sup> Native Voices Rising is a grant initiative that supports organizing and power building in Native American communities. It is a partnership between Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy that started in 2013. For more information, see: <https://nativevoicesrising.org>

spaces, I've shared my perspectives and experiences about what needs to be fundamentally challenged and shifted in the philanthropic sector. To further develop my approach towards my research methods for this study, I drew from two bodies of work: 1) decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies; 2) community-based participatory research methods.

### **Methodological Framework: Decolonizing & Indigenous Methodologies**

In her groundbreaking 1999 book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith articulated a framework from which to understand how research has long been a tool of western and European colonizers. From its very inception, colonial research has been used to dehumanize and further harm Indigenous peoples by not just denying our physical existence but the existence of our knowledge as well. In the first part of her book, Smith traces the history and epistemology of western research paradigms as rooted in colonialism where Indigenous people have almost always served as the object of research rather than as researchers. In the last half of her book, she turns the tables on this dynamic and explores what it can mean for Indigenous people to reclaim their traditional knowledge, decolonize existing research methodologies, and define the ways in which they can use research to further their own decolonial agenda and embark on a collective set of research projects. In her arguments and examples, many Indigenous scholars have found the language to build decolonizing methodologies from their own cultural knowledge as the basis for a body of emerging Indigenous methodologies. Smith has been an inspiration to me as I've sought to conduct research in an ethical way that not only engages our Indigenous communities but empowers us to use these tools in ways that help tell our stories and further our agenda of rebuilding and resourcing our communities.

I'm also deeply influenced by Unanga scholar Eve Tuck, who has challenged educational researchers to move away from the practice of creating "damage-centered" research and what she describes as the long-term impact of decades of research that has contributed to communities of color "thinking of ourselves as broken" (2009, pg. 409). I relate to her piece, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," because, as an executive director for Potlatch Fund, I worked hard to take an asset-based approach to Native philanthropy but still felt caught within the tensions of "demonstrating the need" to funders. I refused to provide foundations with "poverty porn" by only sharing stories of pain, loss, and dire need as the reason why they should provide funding to our Pacific Northwest Native and tribal communities. Instead, I wanted them to see the powerful examples of how Native people are rebuilding their communities and strengthening their culture as opportunities to invest in our innovative yet traditionally grounded approaches. I tried to be very intentional about structuring that as the basis for every interaction that funders had with our communities.

As I argue at the beginning of this dissertation, it's crucial that we understand where the wealth in this country came from, but my argument is not about upholding what Tuck characterizes as damage-centered research or "research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation" (2009, pg. 413). Instead, this project seeks to uplift "desire-centered" research by telling the stories of what Indigenous people are doing to reclaim ancestral land and revitalize their lifeways along with the role that philanthropy can play in their struggle for justice.

In this project, I have woven in personal stories from my experiences as a Native woman in both philanthropy and academia as a way of exemplifying the tensions that I've witnessed –

and how I am unpacking those lessons. Through my research and interviews, I aimed to enact Indigenous storytelling by purposefully asking questions in my interview protocol that would elicit stories – stories based on my collaborators’ personal experiences and stories based within their culture as they relate to how we are traditionally taught about giving and sharing.

Archibald first coined the term “Indigenous storywork” in her earlier work (2008) where she explained her process or method of learning what it means in Coast Salish (specifically Stó:lō First Nations) cultural terms that make meaning out of Indigenous stories. Along with the other Indigenous authors from Australia and New Zealand, Archibald et al. (2019) expanded upon this work by arguing that Indigenous stories have not been taken seriously as valid forms of knowledge by colonial research institutions. Archibald offers her book as a contribution to the field of decolonizing methodologies that challenge Western theories and paradigms by situating storytelling as Indigenous knowledge and theory. The authors also draw upon the 4 R’s of respect, reverence<sup>20</sup>, responsibility, and reciprocity as core principles in their methodology that guides them in working with Indigenous communities. They describe how these principles work together: “In this story research process the researcher must listen to Indigenous Peoples’ stories with respect, develop story relationships in a responsible manner, treat story knowledge with reverence, and strengthen storied impact through reciprocity” (Archibald et al., 2019, pg. 2).

My research study is also conceptually grounded in exploring and articulating how the Native values of respect, relationships, responsibility, and reciprocity shape our traditional

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<sup>20</sup> Archibald et al. argue for the use of “reverence” in place of the term of “relevance” (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) or “respect” (Wilson, 2008).

notions of what it means “to give” in order to sustain and care for community. To unpack notions of how Native people conceptualize ideas like “community”, “care”, and “sustainability” as well as bring these concepts to life as part of the research, I seek to be in community with other Indigenous scholars who are working to decolonize research and articulate Indigenous ways of knowing. However, I also extend this desire to uphold these values in the way that I approach, conduct, and share my research. The process of doing research and becoming an Indigenous researcher requires that I consider the ways in which I am embodying respect, relationality, responsibility, and reciprocity in doing my work.

In his 2008 book, *Research in Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Cree scholar Shawn Wilson writes about what the elements of an Indigenous research paradigm look like in practice:

The knowledge that the researcher interprets must be respectful of and help to build the relationships that have been established through the process of finding out information. Furthermore, the Indigenous researcher has a vested interest in the integrity of the methodology (respectful) and the usefulness of the results if they are to be of any use in the Indigenous community (reciprocity) (Wilson, 2008, pg. 77).

In practical terms, Wilson argues this means that the researcher must ask themselves questions like, “How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?” and “What is my role as researcher in this relationship, and what are my responsibilities?” (pg. 77). These are questions that I considered a lot during the course of this research project and as I wrote up my findings.

For instance, it was very important to me to share preliminary findings with my research participants along the way. In January 2023, I scheduled a Zoom presentation to share my first findings chapter and gather feedback. I also shared drafts of other findings chapters where I

had cited them and asked for their review and opportunity to clarify or edit any of the quotes. While this can also be seen as good practice in ensuring validity through member checking and peer examination (Merriam, 1998), I also think it's an extension of the sense of responsibility I hold for my participants as colleagues and community members. I also am cognizant that since so little has been written in the field about philanthropy – and especially philanthropy from Native and Indigenous perspectives – I want to ensure that all the people I interviewed for this study felt that they were portrayed accurately and respectfully. This is in part what it means to not just be in good relations, but in right relations.

I also wanted to enact the practice of giving with my research participants in a way that felt culturally grounded. After each interview, I sent a thank you card and small gift to each research participant to honor their time, expertise, and knowledge that they shared with me. I had purchased beaded keychains made by a Native youth, which also provided them with a creative outlet during the pandemic and an opportunity to learn some entrepreneurial skills as we negotiated a generous price, set up delivery dates, and they learned how to invoice and communicate as a vendor. The gifts felt more meaningful within this context and allowed for reciprocity not just between myself and my research participants, but allowed for reciprocity between myself as a client and mentor to a young person who was also learning how to be in good relations with people outside their immediate family.

Lastly, I want to speak to how Indigenous research methods informed my positionality as a Diné woman who has worked for over a decade in the Native philanthropy field, served on Native-led foundation and scholarship boards, and would be considered an insider by this community. It goes without saying that with these types of deep relationships comes

responsibilities. I'm reminded of the limits of what social science can offer as a colonial institution that often privileges narratives of pain and hardship.

Tuck and Yang (2014) have written about the politics of refusal with research participants and how “participatory action research and other research approaches that involve participants in constructing the design and collection of voice (as data) are not immune to the fetish for pain narratives” (pg. 8). Native people have every right to refuse to be a part of research based on a historical mistrust and past abuses. This also serves as a reminder that “there are some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn't deserve” (Tuck & Yang, 2014, pg. 10). Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson has also written about ethnographic refusal or grappling with what it means to do research within your own community: “Can I do this and still come home; what am I revealing here and why? Where will this get us? Who benefits from this and why?” (pg. 78, Simpson, 2007).

In this research, I feel just as protective of this network of Native people who work in the field of philanthropy as I would if I were researching my own home community. This study is not intended to become an exposé that sheds light on long-simmering tensions in the field, reveals interpersonal dynamics between people and/or organizations, or exploits personal stories about leadership burnout. Instead, it's intended to be a space for us to imagine alternate Indigenous futures and what it might look like to reclaim philanthropy and re-center Native giving in respect, relationships, communal responsibility, and reciprocity.

I'll share a few examples of how I took on this responsibility to my relationships by choosing not to write about all of the things I was privy to. Over the course of this dissertation, several of the people I interviewed left their positions at their foundations. One was recruited

to a more senior-level position at another foundation, another chose to resign after a series of disappointments about how the foundation continuously failed to realize its commitments to local Native communities. In another jarring example, a program director was suddenly laid off and their program cut after the family foundation abruptly changed course. While we commiserated over these painful realities, it did not feel like my place to tell these stories. Again, “who benefits from this and why?”

### **Methodological Approach: Community-Based Participatory Research Methods**

I also sought to incorporate and blend in a set of methods and stances from the field of community-based participatory research (CBPR), which was largely developed and used in social work and public health but has also branched into education in the form of approaches like youth participatory research. In the ways that decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies have stretched my mind to imagine research from an entirely different standpoint that centers Indigenous ways of knowing, CBPR has helped to ground me in details of “the ways of going about things” respectfully and collaboratively with community partners. This can range from creating memorandums of understanding that lay out the ways that the partnership will be mutually beneficial to both parties, as well as creating group norms for how the partnership will operate. From the tradition of CBPR, I draw from the contributions of Parker (2018), Wallerstein, Duran, Oetzel & Minkler (2018), and Hacker (2013) to help me navigate this research project. One of the key tenets of CBPR is that the principles need to be included throughout the research design, data analysis, writing, and dissemination of the study findings. Part of how I ensured that my research might be of future benefit to the communities I seek to

contribute to was to partner with Native Americans in Philanthropy, the sole national membership-based organization for those working in the field of Native giving.

I engaged in initial conversations with NAP's senior leadership team in December 2021 about the possibility of forming a research partnership when I was still in the early stages of sketching out my study design. We met four more times throughout Spring 2022 to identify areas of interest and convergence, identify staff I could work more closely with, and discuss ways that my research could eventually be shared. They subsequently offered me their support and assistance in my recruitment of research participants through their Native Program Officers network, a burgeoning Native Youth Grantmaking program, and offered space within their annual conference in June 2022 to be able to hold interviews with the participants for my study. I kept notes of these conversations, which I shared back with NAP staff, so I could ensure that I understood what direction the partnership was moving in, and so we could eventually form a formal partnership agreement that outlined our collaboration. We continued to check in and collaborate over the course of this study, and I anticipate that the partnership will continue after the dissertation is completed as I have goals around how to make the findings of this study more accessible to the Native philanthropy sector. We eventually formalized this agreement in January 2024. While the process took considerable time, it did help us to identify specific conference presentations we could co-present as well as reports that we could co-collaborate on.

Within my agreement with NAP, we sought reciprocity for how this study could be mutually beneficial to both parties. Along with an evaluation report that I authored as a consultant with Winoka Yepa, one of NAP's staff and a fellow doctoral student at University of

New Mexico, we also collaborated to update the Spring 2024 Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report. For the report, we combined quantitative data from CHANGE Philanthropy's 2022 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals (DAPP) report with the qualitative data from the interviews I conducted to add more depth to the experiences of Indigenous people working in the field of philanthropy. For example, the quantitative data shows that only 0.2% of the philanthropic field identify as being Native or Indigenous, and through my data, we were able to share more about how that sense of isolation impacts them.

In addition to helping me to think through the process of community engagement, and preparing me to consider all the components of a memorandum of agreement, Hacker (2013) also challenged me to think through potential modes and processes for the future dissemination of the research. She writes, "As a researcher, you are likely to be interested in peer-reviewed journals, while community partners are much more likely to want immediate dissemination so that they can utilize the results in action" (Hacker, 2013, pg. 81). I have found this to be very accurate in enacting this research study using CBPR approaches. It is unlikely that I will seek to publish this work in academic journals because that is not where my intended audience is. In order to contribute back, and potentially influence practitioners in the philanthropy sector, I will need to continue to repackage my research findings into sector reports, conference presentations, or submit articles or editorials to trade publications such as "The Chronicle of Philanthropy" or "Inside Philanthropy".

## **Design of the Study**

### ***Establishing A Community Partner***

As previously explained, I developed a trusting and reciprocal community partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) beginning in December 2022, which was formalized with a memorandum of agreement in January 2024, and will continue until January 2025. While I did serve on the board of NAP from 2011-2017, none of the staff that currently work at NAP knew me back then, nor did I go out of my way to remind them. It felt important to establish these relationships in an equitable way that did not lean into power or past positional roles.

### ***Recruitment Methods***

NAP was crucial in helping me to reconnect and establish relationships with Native American professionals and allies in the sector by promoting my study, connecting me with their listserv so I could conduct purposeful recruitment, and holding me accountable to the goals I set out to ensure that my research findings could be shared in meaningful ways. I worked closely with Brittany Schulman, Vice-President of Programs, to craft a recruitment email that she could send out over the listserv of their Indigenous Program Officers. Once potential participants confirmed their interest in the research study, I reached out with my own recruitment email, which provided much more detail about the purpose, and included research questions, recruitment criteria, and a consent form as per Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols. I also offered to meet with people to better explain the study and answer any questions prior to sending them the consent forms. Consent forms were electronically reviewed and signed via DocuSign or, in a few cases, were printed, signed, scanned, and returned electronically.

### ***Sources of Data***

For this study, I collected and analyzed the following types of data: 75-minute interviews; participant observation, including attending conferences and online webinar sessions; analysis of key documents, including sector reports, internal documents (when shared with me by participants) and websites, including different foundation's vision, mission statements, strategic plans; and grantmaking policies.

Given that this dissertation study is at the crossroads between education, philanthropy, and Indigenous cultural revitalization, and is a relatively new area of study within educational scholarship, I drew from a wide variety of sources, including books, news articles, trade journals, published and unpublished sector reports, websites, conference presentations, online webinars, radio stories, peer-reviewed academic journals, and my own experience as a practitioner within the field for more than a decade. While my primary experiences have been grounded in the Pacific Northwest, I am interested in the context and implications of this body of work nationally.

My primary source of data was the 35 interviews with leaders working within Native American-led foundations, Tribal charitable funds, and mainstream foundations that are focused on and have a successful history of giving grants and endowments to Native causes and communities. I conducted purposeful sampling within the Native and institutional philanthropy sectors to include:

- Native American program officers & senior philanthropic leaders.
- Black program officers & senior philanthropic leaders who are allied with Native philanthropy.

- Non-Native program officers & senior philanthropic leaders of foundations who have an existing commitment or are in the process of building one with Native communities.

### ***Data Collection***

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I envisioned a very different study that included traveling to nine research sites, including Seattle, Washington and the Northwest region; San Francisco, California and Northern California; Denver, Colorado; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Rapid City, South Dakota; Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota; Battle Creek, Michigan; Washington, D.C.; and New York City, New York. I planned to spend six months researching and collecting data in-person, but the pandemic lasted a lot longer than any of us anticipated. By winter 2022, it was clear that it still would be too risky to travel that much and would potentially put my research participants, their families, and communities at risk with in-person interviews. Instead, I changed the design of my study to conduct the majority of my interviews over Zoom video conferencing and participation in online conferences and webinars.

As a participant-observer, I took part in several Zoom webinars, including those offered by NDN Collective, Decolonizing Wealth, and the Freedom Dreaming Collective. I also virtually attended the United Philanthropy Forum in July 2022 and the Truth & Transformation Conference in October 2022, which was hosted by the Institutional Antiracism & Accountability (IARA) Project at Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center. Lastly, I took part in a handful of in-person conferences including:

- Native Americans in Philanthropy & Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy's Power of Solidarity in June 2022 in Seattle, WA.
- Global Summit of Collaborative Funds in October 2023 in San Francisco, CA.

- CHANGE Philanthropy's Unity Summit in October 2023 in Los Angeles, CA.
- 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project's CONNECT gathering in October 2023 in Los Angeles, CA.

Within my participant-observer role, I also have included some of my roles with Native Voices Rising (NVR), a Native-led grant program that funds Native American community organizing and power building. Within NVR, I served as a Community Reviewer since 2019, on the Advisory Board in 2022, as a consultant from October 2022 to May 2023, and finally as a staff member beginning in July 2023. I also served as a consultant for Meyer Memorial Trust, where I facilitated a series of community listening sessions with the aim of helping the program staff to design a Native American portfolio. While I did not formally collect data from these sources, I reestablished connections within the field, learned about new grantmaking strategies, and made observations about how power operates in the sector.

I collected the majority of the interview data from May through September 2022, with three additional interviews conducted in August and September 2023. This process yielded 35 semi-structured interviews that ranged from 60-120 minutes, though most were 75 minutes. I used Zoom and otter.ai to transcribe my interviews and reviewed each transcript for accuracy. I was able to use both sets of transcripts when needed. I occasionally reached out to participants to clarify a section or the spelling of their Tribe or Native words that they used in their interview. I used document analysis to supplement my understanding or follow up on themes that emerged during the interviews or observation.

### ***Interview Protocols***

As part of my University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, I drafted a set of 15 interview questions to use with my research participants. Specific questions

within the interview structure were intended to elicit stories that could be characterized as Indigenous storywork (Archibald, 2008). The draft interview questions were designed to help participants articulate not just their past and present experiences, but what we can imagine for our collective future including the question: *What would our Native communities look like if we could truly decolonize and be properly resourced to rebuild our Native nations?*

### ***Data Analysis***

I organized my data by sources—interview data, field notes, analytical memos, and key documents—and focused first on data management. Most of this involved reviewing the A.I.-prepared transcripts within a day of each interview so that I could clean up any sections of the transcripts that had errors or omissions. I began the process of data identification by re-reading the interview transcripts for sections that stood out to me as significant. I coded by hand what began to emerge as the major themes: 1) Native values and traditional practices of giving; 2) critiques about how the sector of philanthropy operates; 3) imagining the possibilities of what philanthropy could be and how we might work in solidarity towards a more liberated future. Once I could see how these emergent themes were connected to one another and formed a narrative arc, I began to imagine the structure the research findings might take and develop some of the chapter outlines. I continued to revisit and analyze the data as I began drafting the dissertation and wrote analytical memos to document insights along the way. While I did explore the possibility of using the qualitative data tool Dedoose to help me manipulate my data in different ways, I ultimately decided against taking the time to learn and master new software and felt more comfortable with coding by hand.

I also tried to keep my data analysis more holistic and iterative, which is consistent with how other Indigenous researchers approach their work. Wilson (2008) writes “if we are saying that Indigenous methodology includes all of these relationships, if you are breaking things down into their smallest pieces, you are destroying all of the relationships around it. So, an Indigenous style of analysis must look at all those relations as a whole instead of breaking it down” (pg. 119). I was mindful of trying to keep the data within context and connected to the web of relationships within the field of Native philanthropy.

While it is within best practices within community-based participatory research (CBPR) to involve participants in data analysis since “community partners will have an understanding of the context and meaning of these results” (Hacker, 2013, pg. 80), I did not engage my research participants in directly analyzing the data due to the limitations of conducting the study largely over Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, I did create space for them to review their quotes within the context of the fully drafted chapters and accepted their all their edits. I also had subsequent meetings with a few participants to unpack how I made sense of the interview data. My goal was for each participant to not just consent to the research process but to feel fully confident in how they would be presented within the dissertation.

***Research Participants***

**Figure 4**

*Main descriptors of the research participants*

Research Participants (35)	Tribal Affiliations	Race / Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Roles	Region
25 Native or Indigenous	Yurok, Tlingit, Choctaw, Pawnee/Yankton,		26 women	30 – 70 years	Board of Trustees, CEO,	West Coast (including Hawaii)

	Ojibwe, Cherokee, Eastern Cherokee, Walker River Paiute, Ho-Chunk, Apache, Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, Yakama, Pueblo of Cochiti, Lumbee, Seneca-Cayuga, Flandreau Santee, Bdewakantunwan Dakota, Mvskoke Creek, Suquamish, Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian)		5 men  4 queer or non-binary people	old with nearly 50% in the 40-50-year-old range	Executive Director, Vice President, Program Officer, Program Director, Evaluation Consultant	Pacific Northwest  Southwest  Mid-West  East Coast
10 Allies		Black, Filipino, Latine, Asian, Jewish & White				

The targeted recruitment strategy with NAP yielded the majority of the Native-identifying participants. I recruited the ten remaining participants, who identify racially or ethnically as Black, Latine, Asian, Ashkenazi Jewish, or White, based on the qualifier that they are “allies”. While I identified them as allies because I had witnessed them act in ways consistent with what it means to be an ally, in their interviews, many of these participants were quick to point out that they could only be considered “allies” if they were perceived to be so by their Indigenous colleagues. This is consistent with how allyship has been defined in movement spaces: “Allyship is an active and consistent practice of using power and privilege to achieve equity, inclusion, and justice while holding ourselves accountable to marginalized people’s

needs” (Kim, 2019). I will unpack more about this term in chapter 6, which looks at the possibilities for solidarity.

I want to note that not everyone that I reached out to agreed to be a participant. Upon reflection, I realized that those that did not respond or declined did so largely because I have not built or maintained stronger relationships with some people in the field. That in itself is a lesson because no researcher should feel entitled to access all participants within a community. It’s also an opportunity for me to continue building relationships as I further my career in philanthropy. As I gain expanded capacity, I will continue to build upon this work and serve as an ally whenever and wherever I’m called upon.

In total, I interviewed 35 participants, with 25 Native people with direct experience working in the field of philanthropy and 10 allies, including those identifying as Black, Latinx, Asian American, and White. Within the philanthropy sector, they serve in the following roles: board of trustees, chief executive officer (CEO), executive director, vice president, program officer, program director, and evaluation consultant. Their experience levels ranged from this being their first role in philanthropy, to those with decades of experience, to those who had retired from the field. However, more than 50% of the research participants had at least 10 years of experience. Similarly, their ages spanned generations, with the age range from 30 to 70 years old, but roughly half of the participants were in the range of 40-50 years old. In terms of gender, there were 26 women, 5 men, and 4 who identified as queer or non-binary.

Lastly, during the consent process, 55% of the participants expressed a desire to be named in this study while 45% sought anonymity due to the power dynamics within their institutions and in the larger field. Within the data, some research participants are anonymous

in the research findings and will remain so in any subsequent publications or presentations of this work. Where participants are named and their foundations are identified, they have expressly given their consent.

### **Snapshots of Pathways into the Field**

I wish I could introduce you to every person I interviewed for this study. Aside from the sheer number of research participants, many wanted to remain anonymous as a way of sharing their honest stories without feeling overly exposed or vulnerable to the possible repercussions of being so candid. For this particular section, all of these participants consented to be named in the study. While I could have written an entire chapter on their various pathways into the field, I'll instead center stories from a representative sample of Native women who are all rising leaders in the field. They represent Tribal charitable funds, private foundations, Native Hawaiian-led funds, and foundations that fund social justice movement work. All of these snapshots are taken from the response to the interview question: *Tell me about the journey that brought you into the field of philanthropy. Is this what you imagined you would be when you grew up?*

#### ***Participant 1: Robin Sigo (Suquamish Tribe), Director of the Suquamish Foundation***

Robin is someone I have long referred to as a co-conspirator of mine. We first met at a grantee convening at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2012 and as many Native women do, we exchanged compliments on one another's jewelry. What we quickly realized, though, was that in a room full of mostly community foundations from Washington and Oregon, Potlatch Fund and the Suquamish Foundation represented the only Native perspectives. We felt a sense of responsibility to educate other funders and ask pointed questions about how many

of these foundations had an explicit commitment to funding Native organizations and Tribes in their service region.

When I asked Robin to share her journey in philanthropy, she reflected on her history of volunteering in her tribal community since she was a child. When it was time for her to consider where to go to college, she dreamed of leaving to pursue her dreams. “When I imagined what I would do when I grew up was that I would run away to somewhere big, like, I wanted to go to Sarah Lawrence [in New York City]. I wanted to live in a big city where not everybody knew my name. And I didn’t know what I wanted to do, but I knew that it wasn’t here on the reservation”. Instead, with some financial support from her tribe, she earned her bachelor’s degree in anthropology and then a master’s in social work at the University of Washington. It was during a summer break that she was asked to come back to help her community by working for the Suquamish Tribe’s summer school. When that job ended, the director encouraged her to stay on and start grant writing. Robin explained:

I started seeing spots where I could write grants and people can have their jobs for longer. At the time, our Elders were only living to be about 60 years old. So, we dropped the age of an Elder from 65 to 55 in the 1980s because they weren’t living that long. So, there were opportunities [where] I could write this diabetes prevention grant. And as I started doing that, I started seeing the community around it.

From there, Robin began to recognize ways that she could contribute to improving the community around her, and she realized, “Yeah, I want to be here. And maybe I want to be the executive director, or maybe I want to run for tribal council. What did those things look like?”

Within her more than two decades of service to her community, Robin has served as both the executive director of the Suquamish Foundation and as a tribal councilwoman for consecutive terms while raising her four children and continuing to volunteer on boards like

Kids in Concert. She links it back to those early experiences: “So, ultimately, I just started writing the grants because I wanted people to live longer... And I wanted youth services to be able to offer cultural programs, and there wasn’t anything that was available then. And, so, a lot of the work I’ve done, my professional journey really coincides with what was needed by my tribal community.”

***Participant 2: Hester Dillon (Cherokee Nation), Program Director of the Indigenous***

***Communities at the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project / Schmidt Family Foundation***

I first met Hester when she was serving as the Indigenous Communities program officer for NoVo Foundation and Potlatch Fund was a grant recipient. When NoVo changed direction, Hester left and served as a consultant for Native Voices Rising, where I served as a community reviewer and then on the advisory council. We’ve stayed in touch over the years and when I joined Common Counsel Foundation to work on the Native Voices Rising grant program, I learned that our work is funded by 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project, where Hester serves as the program director. I’ve always appreciated the care that Hester brings to her work and the ways in which she is aware of the power dynamics in philanthropy, ceding power in whatever ways she can. When I asked Hester about her pathway into philanthropy, she shared:

I can remember going to museums and other cultural events and you'd see, like, the name of the foundation as a supporting sponsor, but I never really kind of thought too much about what that was, what it meant, where the money came from, and how it all worked mechanically. I didn't really think about philanthropy and how it operates until I was writing grants for the Karuk Tribe for a little over four years. Most of our funding was federal funding and it was contracted by the government. We had a little bit of philanthropic funding from the Blue Shield Foundation of California. And then I worked for a Native nonprofit as the Director of Development at the Indian Law Resource Center for a couple of years. And all of our funding came from either philanthropy or individual donors because we didn't take any government funding from the U.S. or other governments because of the nature of the work that we did. So, I got more

familiar with philanthropy, and also quickly learned how little philanthropy gifts to Indigenous-led work and communities.

After years of experience as a grant writer, and then as a development director in which she was constantly fundraising, Hester got curious about what the other side of the relationship was like:

And then I saw a position advertised for NoVo, when they were launching their Indigenous Communities initiative and really kind of bringing that work into the foundation as it had historically been in a donor advised fund. And, so, I thought, 'Oh, that would be so interesting'. I had been writing grants and trying to raise money for all these years, like, it would be so cool to actually give the money away instead of looking for it. And, so, I was fortunate to be able to do that. I applied for that job. And that's when I started working in NoVo. And, so, that's really what brought me brought me into philanthropy. I did not think that that was something I would do; I just did not see that as a career path. I really hadn't even thought about grant writing as a career path until I saw it advertised. And I thought, 'I like to write and I like to do research. I'm interested in storytelling so I'm going to apply for this job'. And they must have thought something about my argument was convincing, because they asked me to do it.

While it might seem sort of arbitrary, Hester's journey into the field is actually very common. Many program officers have initially worked in nonprofit organizations as grant writers, development directors, or executive directors or CEOs before making the transition over to working in philanthropy. Their lived experience and insights about how challenging it is to fundraise and write grants helps to inform their practice as a grant maker and instills a sense of humility. As I will further argue in chapter 5, the field needs more experienced Native people from the nonprofit sector to serve as program officers, senior leadership, and trustee roles. These people will bring with them the perspective of being there to serve community first and foremost.

***Participant 3: Vicky Stott (Ho-Chunk Nation), Program Officer on the Racial Equity, Community Engagement & Leadership team at W.K. Kellogg Foundation***

Vicky and I met at a grantee convening hosted by the Kellogg Foundation almost a decade ago, when she was brand new to her position as a program officer. Since then, we've continued to periodically connect; most recently, we spent time with one another at Native Americans in Philanthropy's conference in Seattle in June 2022. As the conference wrapped, we had an opportunity to spend an afternoon together, both catching up and doing an in-person interview. I thought I knew Vicky fairly well, but as she began to open up and share her story, I realized that there was so much that I didn't know about her journey into the field and what commitments she holds – particularly from her past international experiences. She shared:

I never would have imagined I'd be working where I am right now. I don't think I've met a single Native person that's working in philanthropy that ever imagined that they would be doing this today. It's just something you just naturally did. And it was just part of life and part of community. And I had always worked for Native nonprofits for a number of years and learned a lot from different leaders along the way [about] how to do real solid organizing work and building up organizations. And along that journey, I'd always wanted to do international work. Part of my background is in human rights, programming, and then in genocide studies, and so life has opened up an opportunity to [do] international work for nearly five years at Oxfam.

This felt distinctly different from most of the lived experiences of the other participants in this study. Most Native and Indigenous people had experience working with their tribal community, or with another Native nation or Native-led nonprofit organization. So, I asked Vicky to tell me more about what this experience was like, and what it felt like to be so far from home.

I was part of an international human rights team... I was basically shipped out to wherever I was needed in different countries to work with Indigenous people in different countries. And I started around 2012 and kept going for quite a while. The first place I lived and worked in was in Afghanistan. I worked with communities in the north and the northeast and just different Indigenous communities. And it was an absolutely life changing experience. A lot of the work

that I did there was really helping a lot of local women's rights organizations to learn how to build their own organizations, pursue their own funding, and to understand how to navigate around the system and work within it. And part of my job for the whole international experience was always just to build it to where I was no longer needed. And I really appreciated that role, because there's so many people on the ground in these different countries that are just so amazing and incredible. And all I can do is just support and, you know, mentor them, and then just get out of the way. And, so, for me, that was like an ideal situation to be in.

This concept of helping Indigenous organizations to build their capacity so that the trainer is no longer needed is so important. One of the critiques of the nonprofit industrial complex is that nonprofits can inadvertently keep people in an endless loop of need without any real solutions while that need helps nonprofits perpetuate their mission and funding. Vicky also picked up the skills of helping people to understand how systems work, and how to navigate through and around them, which is something that is very valuable when working with/in large institutional foundations like Kellogg. Vicky continued to explain the range of her experiences:

And from Afghanistan, I went to East Africa for two years and worked in a few different countries in very similar endeavor. I worked with a lot of women in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and helped them build their organizations [to eventually] step out of the way. My final sort of assignment was on the Syria response. And this is why I was based in the Middle East and traveled a lot between Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. I did a lot of work with Syrian families and children – and more so around mental health services – as a lot of Syrians were fleeing the country. And just helping them to kind of transition into, unfortunately, refugee camp situations or living in host communities. It was an extensive amount of work. And, so, I learned how to navigate the United Nations and the European Union systems. You know, it's complicated, being in different countries and especially in areas where there was significant conflict. A lot of Indigenous communities that were having to rebuild after war and genocide, and I learned a lot about humanity. There are so many people and not just here, but globally - especially countries where there is significant conflict – that people, especially families, they just want peace and security. They just want good jobs so that they can rebuild their lives.

***Participant 4: Micky Huihui (Kānaka Maoli/Native Hawaiian), Executive Director of the Hawaii Peoples Fund***

The first time that I heard Micky speak was on a panel about decolonizing philanthropic giving at Native Americans in Philanthropy & Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy's conference in June 2022. I was drawn to the panel as it also had speakers from Social Justice Fund Northwest, an organization I already had deep commitments to. Even though Micky joined the panel by Zoom from Hawaii, her passion for the giving project Hawaii Peoples Fund had recently launched came through and stole the show. I reached out immediately to another panelist to get an email introduction, so I could get to know more about Micky and her work. Through interviews with her, and three additional participants with Native Hawaiian ancestral ties, I realized how much I still didn't know about Hawaii's colonial history. While I knew that Native Hawaiians have a different political status than Native Americans, I didn't realize how this shifts their goals for exercising their sovereignty and reclaiming their sacred lands like Mauna Kea. Micky is also the first executive director in her foundation's history to be Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian), which has shifted the ways that the foundation functions from funding the movement to being directly part of the movement.

I asked her about her journey into philanthropy and she talked about how her first exposure to philanthropy was through organizing a funder learning tour:

My journey into the world of philanthropy started in 2015, which was a year before I came to the [Hawaii] Peoples Fund. I took a contract gig to be a coordinator for a philanthropic tour that was coming to Hawaii. And not knowing anything about philanthropy, I was, like, 'Well, these people are coming to Hawaii, but let's make sure that it is in a non-extractive way. And, so, as I started working with the planners for the Neighborhood Funders Group on this learning tour, I started to realize that these are not tourists. They are actually coming to

learn about inequity in Hawaii, and what the philanthropic sector could do to fix that. And it blew my mind. I didn't even know that existed - it was just incredible. And they were such wonderful folks on the planning committee. Their whole mission was to lift up social justice and social change. At the time, I was a raging sovereignty advocate – and I still am. And I saw that these guys are actually interested in hearing about Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian struggle. These are big foundations that were coming. I had never been around that kind of, you know, that kind of wealth in that concentrated way [that exists] in philanthropy.

It was clear to me that Micky had the skills and mindset of an organizer because once she understood what the assignment was, she quickly realized what a unique opportunity she had to create exposure for Native Hawaiian organizations' work to be highlighted in this funder learning tour.

And with my hyper familiarity with the Hawaiian community and folks who were doing social change work in Hawaii, that that was an asset to the planning of the tour. And, so, it wasn't just the office lady making sure they had hotels, food, cars and stuff. It was, 'Where should we go and who should we plug into?' And that really paved the way for me to realize, like, the impact that philanthropy could have on these movements, I mean, all of us, we do this work, whether we got money or not to do it. We're just going to do it. And it was intriguing to me that there was an entire sector out there that would fund it. And in a way that wouldn't make you jump through all the hoops. I worked in Hawaiian education for close to a decade [doing] grant writing and fitting in what they want to see [in grant reports], and all of that extractive non-trust-based kind of stuff. It blew my mind. And it moved me that there were philanthropic organizations out there that were intent on fixing stuff that was done wrong. So, I was able to connect them with a bunch of different folks that fit right into their priorities of [learning about] immigrant issues, Hawaiian sovereignty, and Waikanae empowerment.

The funders learning tour also exposed Micky to the work of Hawaii Peoples Fund because it was part of that tour. She explained, "When I heard that the executive director was retiring, I threw my name in the hat because [I understood] it's a community engagement gig. My only experience was facilitating that tour. I didn't know it was a fundraising gig at all. I had no idea. I started as the executive director in 2016 and didn't think I was going to make it past

2018, but it's been quite an incredible journey.” While this story seems remarkable in the way that it made such a huge impression on Micky, one of the other Native Hawaiian participants, Michelle Kauhane, also shared a story about how her first exposure to philanthropy came by way of a funders tour that was organized by the Ford Foundation. In this way, funder learning opportunities don't have to be extractive in the sense that the learning is one-sided, only benefitting the foundation participants. When planned thoughtfully, it can engage local people in ways that provide exposure to a sector they know little about and help them to imagine ways that they can meaningfully contribute to.

### **Promising Methodological Approach: Towards Humanizing Research with Dialogical**

#### **Interviewing**

Most of my interviews were conducted over Zoom in the summers of 2022 and 2023 as we continued to emerge from the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While I was appreciative of the opportunity to create connections with people, it was still hard at times to feel as connected as we would if we were in-person and in a relaxed setting where we could share stories. However, I did have a few of those experiences, and one was quite remarkable both in the way that the interview unfolded and how rich our conversation felt when we were no longer confined by technology, distance, or time.

To help explain what happened in this particular interview, I draw from San Pedro's method of dialogical interviewing (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). In summer 2023, I had a chance to take a summer seminar with Tim San Pedro and listen in on a panel he did with Cowichan scholar Emma Elliott, where they demonstrated what dialogical interviewing could look like. San Pedro has written about this practice within the body of

literature that advocates for researchers to move toward humanizing research (Paris & Wynn, 2014) by being in good and right relations with research participants through interactions that exhibit care, dignity, and that communicate value and worthiness.

Once demonstrated, this technique instantly reminded me of the in-person interview that I did with Vicky Stott. That interview was not only much longer than any other interview that I did, but the setting and looser structure of it allowed for a deepening of a methodological practice and opened up possibilities to deepen our personal and professional relationship.

During her stories about her international work, Vicky talked about the toll that work took on her personally. She shared:

And that was, like, such a gift because someone like me, as a foreigner, shouldn't be a necessity. You know, people can save themselves, they'll figure it out. I always thought if I could just share a little bit of wisdom and expertise, I'll do that. And, so, for me after that work, I came home and I was exhausted. I didn't even know how exhausted I was. And this is right around the time Standing Rock was just getting off the ground. I went home and I was with my mom and all my aunties, you know, they know us so well. They recognize when you're going through things. And my mom, she just said, 'Before you do any community work, we're going to put you through a prayer ceremony.' She was like, 'You shouldn't be out trying to work in community until you take care of some of your own healing.'

I deeply felt what Vicky said about needing to focus on your own healing. While I didn't immediately respond with my own story, I sat with that wisdom. As the formal part of the interview was coming to a close, I felt the need to share parts of myself that I don't often talk about with other colleagues in the field. I opened up and shared:

I think, for a long time, when I thought about some of the work that we were doing [at Potlatch Fund], I thought about us contributing to the healing of other people. It hit me one day that it's also about healing myself. And, you know, [as Native people] we are only a couple generations out from our grandparents, who were in boarding schools. Some of that dysfunction is rooted in what it meant for kids to survive that experience and it gets passed down. There are still

some patterns I see in my family where I understand it's from that trauma. It's loss of language, loss of family, and community. When I was thinking about some of that healing work, I came across this quote: 'Let's raise children that don't have to recover from their childhoods.' And that is deeply profound. How much stronger would we all be if we didn't spend decades of our lives trying to break free from that trauma and be able to live with our full souls?

I shared with Vicky that I had read the book, *The Deepest Well*, by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, a Black pediatrician who studied the long-term health impacts of childhood trauma and adversity. In the appendix of the book, there is a quiz where you can tally your own adverse childhood experience (ACE) score.

I feel like I'm coming from a privileged place [where] I have some trauma, but I don't think I have that much trauma. I scored a 6 out of 10. And as part of our staff development, everyone on my team read this book. Most of [the Native staff] scored six or seven, which was shocking. There are so many ways that trauma shows up and it's almost normalized at a community level. We have a lot of healing to do. And not just healing at a community level or helping other people heal, but I realized during the pandemic – since it was such an isolated time – that I need to be working on my own healing too.

While my own healing and wellbeing isn't the topic of this dissertation, it has certainly impacted my career and at times forced me to slow down and take breaks. I've had to learn, in the hardest ways, the adage that you can't take care of others unless you first take care of yourself. Within my own close relationships, I often share advice with other Native women in the field about the importance of self-care and creating stronger work/life boundaries so that we can sustain ourselves over the long-term and avoid burnout.

In closing, I'm reminded again of the preface to Windchief's and San Pedro's book, *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities*, where they share the three overarching lessons they hope other researchers will glean from the chapters:

- 1) Indigenous stories are often historical but can also be modern;
- 2) There are lessons couched in this story that relate directly to Indigenous research;

particularly, knowledge is a gift, and that gift comes with responsibility which can be either a burden or an opportunity to share, depending on the readiness of the receiver; 3) Relationships are central in the role of sharing/gifting knowledge (2019, pgs. xxiii & xxiv).

I hope that the stories that have been shared with me as gifts can be re-gifted to the larger community that I'm a part of. My goal for this dissertation is to share these stories and knowledge to inspire change within the philanthropy sector and ultimately bring more resources to Native communities.

## Chapter 4: What Does Native “Giving” Mean?

### Figures 5 & 6

*[Left] My Dad’s garden in our backyard in Payahuunadü; [Right] My brother Ohnopee with his first mule deer that he successfully hunted in fall 2021.*

Note. Photo credit: [Left] Dana Arviso; [Right] Paul Ohnopee Chavez



Modern philanthropy operates with a settler lens, meaning that support is only granted if there’s enough ‘need’. What counts as a ‘need’ and how that need is met fall into strict, hierarchical criteria, which results in marginalized people – particularly Indigenous Peoples – being ignored and/or poorly supported. Indigenous Peoples are active philanthropists and to Indigenize philanthropy is to incorporate and practice our Native values by treating acts of giving as relational, reciprocal, intergenerational, generous, and respectful. We invite non-Native individuals and organizations to reflect on how these values related with mainstream philanthropic practices. – Native Americans in Philanthropy (2023)

Giving is more than an act, it’s a way of life for Native people. It’s also cultural to us, grounded in the ways in which we survived the seasons and hardships by sharing resources abundantly. Traditionally we did not let a fear of scarcity influence us into hoarding resources,

because we knew that the land would continue to provide for us. However, our ability to practice giving has been disrupted by settler colonialism and capitalism, causing us to lose access to and control over our traditional homelands and natural resources. While some of us still practice bartering and other traditional economies (Hosmer et al., 2004), most of us aren't able to live outside of modern capitalism and have become complicit in upholding it and adopting mindsets of scarcity.

### **Native Giving in My Own Life and in Tribal Communities**

Before we can understand how divergent the concepts of giving and philanthropy have become, we need to unpack what I mean when I refer to as *Native giving*. This chapter is devoted to sharing stories that help us to trace what giving has meant to Native people over time and across geographies. In addition, this chapter will help unpack several concepts that are helpful to understanding the relationships between Native people and giving and Native people and capitalism: settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and differing definitions of wealth. Together, these understandings will show tensions, incommensurabilities, and ways forward for Native people and philanthropy.

As I shared in earlier chapters that traced the history of philanthropy, the word “philanthropy” comes from a Greek word meaning “man-loving,” its modern meaning was narrowed with the introduction of the philanthropy sector in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century starting with the creation of the Carnegie Foundation. However, Layton (2022) makes the argument that we need to redefine our understanding of American philanthropy by recognizing that philanthropy has existed long before the creation of foundations as collective giving both in African American and Latino traditions, namely mutual aid societies and community giving

circles respectively. He also recognizes the need to expand who counts as a “philanthropist” by acknowledging generosity beyond just wealthy people who give large monetary donations to everyday people who “seek to improve our communities”.

I want to open this chapter by sharing a few stories of my own that are based in my family’s experiences. As someone who has lived within two reservation communities—the Navajo Nation and Bishop Paiute Tribe—and urban cities like Anchorage, Sacramento, and Seattle, my own experience of giving is rich and varied. Some of my earliest memories involve driving with my mother across rutted dirt roads on the Navajo Nation with a steaming crockpot of homemade mutton stew in the trunk so we could deliver ceremonial food to a family who lost a loved one. Beyond cash donations to families to help with funeral costs, Native people are known to also spring into action to buy, prepare, and deliver food not just to grieving families but also in other times of need without ever needing to be asked.

Aside from the “official” ways that I’ve participated in philanthropy by making tax-deductible donations to nonprofits I support, I’ve also given to numerous Native families within my community. I’ve contributed to breakfast burrito or Indian taco sales, 50/50 drawings, raffles for Indian jewelry or handmade skirts, special benefit events, old school donation jars, online Venmo campaigns, and more GoFundMe campaigns than I can keep track of. Over the years, I’ve helped send our young people to college with textbooks and a little bit of emergency savings; supported our relatives when their newborn baby was in the ICU; assisted families coping with the high cost of cancer treatments and travel to cities to access care; and contributed funds for high school athletes to travel to national sports competitions where they might get scouted for college admissions.

During the pandemic, I've also contributed to online COVID-19 relief efforts like the Navajo & Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund<sup>21</sup> to benefit people I'm not directly connected or in community with. But none of these acts were things I identified as "philanthropy". Instead, they felt like being a community member that helps one another through life's modern-day struggles by extending care. As a member of a tight-knit small tribal community, I also knew that these same families would reciprocate and show up for me and my family if we needed that kind of financial and emotional support.

I have other stories of giving though that are more rooted in carrying on our cultural ways and providing for our community in more traditional ways. This chapter opens with two photos from my family in Payahuunadü, or the Land of Flowing Water, which is the homelands of my Paiute family. On the left is a photo of my Dad's garden in our backyard, where he grows corn, tomatoes, peppers, kale, herbs, and different varieties of squash. It's a smaller version of the huge garden that my grandma Dorothy planted and tended to every year.

While we aren't unique in the Eastern Sierra for being hunters, gatherers, or gardeners, what is unique is how the Bishop Paiute Tribe has supported and cultivated these practices and helped to revive cultural knowledge. Established in 2015, The Bishop Paiute Tribe Food Sovereignty Program's mission is "working to increase access to and awareness of healthy, traditional and environmentally-responsible, community-grown food that sustains an independent and resilient program which acknowledges, preserves, and strengthens existing community food systems and tribal sovereignty." Every spring, the food sovereignty program

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<sup>21</sup> For more information about this unique partnership and solidarity effort between Navajo & Hopi tribal communities that emerged in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, please see their website: <https://navajohopisolidarity.org>

educates community members, provides seeds and starter plants for small family gardens, and plants its own large community garden that yields enough food to deliver bags of fresh produce to Tribal Elders. Additional crops are shared with our local Head Start and tribal daycare center throughout the seasons, and if there is enough leftover, they also sell it at the weekly local farmers market.

With grant support from First Nations Development Institute<sup>22</sup> in 2016, the Tribal program was able to “expand its garden-based nutrition education projects to encourage healthy food and lifestyle choices by partnering with the Bishop Elementary School (BES), the Bishop Indian Head Start (BIHS), and the Inyo County Health and Human Services Department and its food initiative programs.” Small family gardens became especially important to Tribal communities during the pandemic because it allowed them to be more self-sufficient at a time when grocery store shelves were sometime bare between truck deliveries from the cities. It also helped support their nutritional needs at a time when so many were focused on improving their health and immunity and they knew that this food came from a safe and trusted source.

On the right is a photo of my brother Ohnopee with a mule deer that he successfully hunted this past fall. This was his second deer, but it was just as meaningful to him as his first because he got to keep more of it for our family. His first deer was donated back to the community as is our tradition with a first kill. While seasonal hunting permits are accessible through the State of California through a lottery system, a historic 2020 Memorandum of Agreement between the Bishop Paiute Tribe and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife

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<sup>22</sup> This project was funded by First Nations Development Institute with support from the Walmart Foundation: <https://www.firstnations.org/stories/bishop-paiute-expands-nutrition-education/>

(CDFW) expanded access to Tribal members to hunt their traditional foods<sup>23</sup>. The MOA authorizes “the Tribe to take up to 16 mule deer per year for cultural education purposes”, honoring the Tribe’s effort to preserve its culture and wellbeing through the tradition of hunting deer (Peebles Kidder, 2020).

In enabling this practice, the CDFW “recognizes the Tribe’s unique authority to protect wildlife resources within its ancestral territories.”<sup>24</sup> Bishop Paiute Tribal member and attorney Anna Hohag assisted in the writing of and the negotiation of the agreement by creatively using the existing authority outlined in the state’s guidelines for scientific collecting permits. The Tribe’s priority in negotiating such a historic intergovernmental agreement is to secure its continued access to its traditional homelands. This agreement allows Tribal members to conduct cultural hunts for the community in order to help pass along traditional knowledge to younger generations and ensure wellness through access to traditional foods. For example, Anna’s nephew Cain Omohundro was 16 years old when he participated in a community hunt with other Tribal members as well as individual hunts using these deer tags. In personal correspondence with me, Anna shared:

I was present for the signing ceremony with the Tribal Council and the CDFW. It was actually very emotional. Being a young attorney fresh out of law school, I had initially envisioned more of a confirmation and recognition of our aboriginal hunting rights. However, when I heard Tribal Elder Monty Bengochia compare it to our Tribe’s version of a ‘treaty’ (or other meaningful agreements) that will help reconnect our people to our traditional territories and practices, it made me realize its importance. To this day, seeing how many Tribal members who have benefitted from the agreement makes me extremely proud to be a part of the team to see it through. This is a prime example of how Tribes building a positive

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<sup>23</sup> For more about this 2020 MOA, please see: <https://www.ndnlaw.com/bishop-paiute-tribal-council-reaches-milestone-agreement-with-california-department-of-fish-and-wildlife/>

<sup>24</sup> For the full text of the MOA, please see: <https://secretary.resources.ca.gov/2020/02/bishop-paiute-tribe-and-department-of-fish-and-wildlife-enter-into-historic-agreement/>

relationship with their state stakeholders can make a real and lasting impact on their people and their well-being.

Anna also acknowledged that this MOA can be renegotiated again to both expand access beyond the original 16 mule deer permitted for Tribal hunting, and to simplify the reporting terms and process. However, it strikes me how entrenched our ability to practice our cultural ways are with our ability to exercise our Tribal sovereignty. Which also raises the critical question: *How can we continue to provide for our people through our traditional ways of giving if we can't access our traditional foods and natural resources on our ancestral homelands?*

### **What are Your Experiences of Giving?**

Similar to my own early recollections of giving, my research participants shared their own deep and personal stories of giving. But in the spirit of Eve Tuck's 2009 "Letter to Communities", I want to preface the sharing of these stories within a reminder that we no longer have to share our stories of pain to legitimize our needs. Instead, when we conceptualize our research, we need to really go back to highlighting the strengths and resilience of our Native people. Much like how Tuck has advanced a theory about the need to move toward *desire-based research* instead of *deficit-based research*, I would like to propose extending that concept to considering what *desire-based giving* looks like in contrast to the prevalence of deficit-based giving, in which support is only granted based on demonstrated needs, which are themselves guided by settler capitalist logics.

Similar to how philanthropy was originally based on a charity model supported by churches, the premise of "need" is also problematic because it comes from that deficit model where "gifts" of food, shelter, clothing, and medicine were given by white missionaries who

wanted to save Native people by converting them to Christianity. While my literature review explained philanthropy's roots in colonialism and white saviorism, other leaders in philanthropy, like Naylor and Blackwell (2022) have offered sharp critiques of the field in the aftermath of the 2020 racial justice movement<sup>25</sup>.

I hope that when you read these stories, you aren't drawn to the descriptions of poverty and despair but instead recognize the strength and resilience of how Native people have overcome circumstances largely wrought by settler colonialism to still practice core teachings and values of generosity, giving, and reciprocity. I hope that you also recognize that these people chose to share their personal stories with a broader audience because they want you to understand what they bring to their work in philanthropy – powerful lived experiences. These are not people who were born into monetary wealth, though many of them now have the responsibility and challenge of giving away money – sometimes working within family foundations who hold complicated histories of intergenerational wealth. These are largely people from families and communities who were stripped of their resources, land, and wealth by colonization but are still working every day to help wealthy donors and foundations understand how to give and make the greatest impact. Their collective strength is their lived experiences because they have personally experienced some of the challenges of poverty and still emerged as advocates and warriors for their communities.

A central argument in my body of work is that Native people who are working in philanthropy already understand the real complexity of the issues facing our communities. They

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<sup>25</sup> For more on these critiques of white saviorism in philanthropy, please see Naylor & Blackwell's 2022 article: <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/freeing-ourselves-from-colonial-white-savior-models-of-philanthropy/>

also know that we already have insights and solutions, but we need funding to enact those strategies and heal our communities. In order to draw forth some of these stories, one of my first questions during the interview process was to ask my research participants to share some of their childhood understandings of giving. I asked the following questions: *Tell me about your earliest memory of your family giving to other people who were in need. What did that look like and how did it make you feel? What values did you learn from that example?*

While I received a range of insightful responses, this story from a Tlingit woman who grew up in Southeast Alaska and now serves as a foundation president exemplifies how deep this concept runs in our traditional teachings and cultural practices:

I have so many amazing memories of folks gifting and sharing and living in the most generative, generous and cooperative way. And it actually wasn't until I reached adulthood that I actually began to understand that those were cultural practices. At the time, it just felt like the way that we lived our life. And one of the examples I can think of is our community did cooperative hunting, so every person would go and essentially do all of the deer hunting together. And so it was very common that everyone would go together. And we might bring back 12 or 14 deer, and then everyone would cooperatively butcher it and then distributed equally amongst the community in a way that made sense for what each family needed... But now I look back and think through and recognize what that means as far as a worldview and a philosophy: the really practical and day-to-day generosity that it encompasses. I also think through and now I understand it as a really intentional way that gifting and generosity was built into the culture but the spirit of not just like Pacific Northwest [Native] culture... I really see it throughout the whole region of like intentional gifting and people giving, really showing their values and their idea of wealth and community stature being measured by what you can give and share. And I think sometimes that gets very romanticized. But I think back to the way that I grew up in the way so many of the ways that I saw Elders as teachers and leaders doing that time and time again... It was such a big part of the community and identity and culture, that it's hard to explain because it just feels like the norm; it actually wasn't until I joined a more mainstream institutions and organizations that I realized that that was actually not the norm.

There's so much to unpack in this quote, but the main idea that I want to underscore is that giving is so "deeply ingrained" in our Native and Indigenous cultures that it almost goes unnoticed until it is named. Many of the Native people that I interviewed were unfamiliar with the term of "philanthropy" until they entered the sector, but every single person was deeply familiar with both the practice and value of giving, and how giving helps a community to both survive and flourish.

### ***How do Native People Learn about Giving?***

While it was not initially my intention to begin an inquiry into how Native people learn about the practice of giving, one of my interview questions asked about participants' earliest memories of giving. The responses to this question yielded powerful stories about giving and community care and helped me realize that I needed to explore more about giving as a learning process. For this I looked to Elliott's and Meixi's (2022) article in which they identify four ethical qualities (relationality, reciprocity, responsibility, and respect) that are embedded within Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Such qualities are woven into the moral and ethical fabric of a community. These Indigenous women scholars propose a relational framework that helps us to understand how children learn who they are in relation to their community. By learning by observing about how other family members "pitch in" to help others within extended family and community, children begin to learn that they are interdependent by upholding these relational, sustainable, and ethical codes. This is distinctly different from how non-Native children come to understand their psychological sense of self when they are raised in Western cultures as highly individualistic people who are more attuned to their individual needs and wants. The authors also argue that IKS is also inclusive of how our concept of "relationality"

extends to the land as part of our relations. My research on Native giving seeks to extend this relational framework by arguing that it also undergirds Indigenous understandings of a system of giving and reciprocity that operates within our communities.

### ***The Land Gives to Us***

In many of the examples shared with me, Native and Indigenous relatives shared additional stories of giving as the redistribution of resources among their community and especially emphasized the sharing of traditional foods for sustenance and survival. Similar to how one participant described communal hunting in her Tlingit community in southeast Alaska, Paiute member Joni Crines shared how Tribal hunters in the Great Basin region of Nevada shared their bounty from hunting and fishing off the land:

My dad and brothers were big hunters. So, from what you know, like from the time I can remember, they were always out hunting for whatever the season was. So from deer to rabbit and ducks and geese and pheasants, and fish... The men would go hunting, they would come back and the boys would clean them. And then they would take as much [as we needed] for us. And then they would deliver to our grandparents. And then they would go around. I was just thinking about that the other day, they would go around to like all the elders. – Joni Crines, Na’ah Illahee Fund

In her stories, Joni really wanted to stress that the community had a system of redistribution in place by delivering excess game to the community with priority to widows, elders, and families in need:

And they must have had a system, you know, so that everybody got something. You know, so like, one time this person the next time then the next person... and then, like, the widows, you know, with no men in their family. And definitely the old people, you know, like old hunters who couldn't hunt anymore. So, they would go around and they would they would give away the excess game to keep everybody in food. I remember my grandpas, Conan Doyle and Robert Johnson, talking about like, the fishing platforms, and how, like, the community, all of the men would build it. And then everybody would just take turns, and they would only take what they needed, you know... So, if there was a family with, like, eight children, then they

would take more, you know, or six kids into parents, you know, they would take more, but you know, [if there was a] smaller family with only three then they would take less. And so I just, I just think that you know, as people we've always, like, protected the stocks, you know, not be greedy about everything, just take within and then that was my breath was saying that, at least like the forest, like people weren't greedy, they only took what they needed. And you know, I've never, you know... the commercial side to make money at it. Anyway, I just, I just kind of think that's a beautiful way of life that, you know, nobody's forgotten. Yeah. You know, the single moms that don't happen to [have] men in their families, or everybody just kind of looked out for each other. – Joni Crines, Na'ah Illahee Fund

This is the essence of Native giving: “everybody just kind of looked out for each other,” as Joni eloquently describes. Within these practices of traditional giving are the intertwined values of relationality, responsibility to community, and reciprocity. I also appreciate how attentive the men in her community were to providing food to those who needed it most within the community and employed a sense of equity in determining how much to allocate.

Lastly, another participant shared stories from her childhood growing up as a Yurok Tribal member and observing how other community members left offerings to her grandparents, who were Elders who provided access from their land to the nearby river where people fished.

I think even before so, most of my earliest memories are with my great grandparents on the Yurok reservation at the mouth of the Klamath River, where my people have lived since the beginning of time and where my people still live today. And, and a lot of my memories are of being with my Grandpa in our – in his – Smokehouse behind the house, which, when I was a little, it was so big, and the fish were, like, so high in the air, and like all of those smells and feelings, and, and I think the first memories when I think about, like, giving back are actually of people bringing the Elders things. So, there's, so the, the, the trail down to the mouth of the river is, um, goes right by their house, and we're the only tribal house right on that, at that point in the trail. And so, and so. And, you know, it's obviously still happens today with my Grandma living there and Auntie that people come and drop off, you know, eels and fish and, you know, part of the catch, and I think just that memory of this is just what you do is you make sure that you're sharing and that you know, Elders are taken care of, and, and that you're sharing and the bounty is just the just sort of feels like a natural sort of piece.

The other teaching these stories exemplify is the concept of “subsistence” or living off the land (Kuokkanen, 2011). Before settlers arrived, Native people had deep and reciprocal relations with the land that allowed them to survive cold winters, seasons of famine, and other unknowns. This traditional knowledge and set of skills combine our cultures, identities, and practices of communal wellbeing as a way of life. It also allowed Native people to maintain a deep knowledge of and connection to land, and it held up our traditional economies of sharing and bartering.

While Alaska Native people have retained subsistence living as a part of their negotiations with the State of Alaska<sup>26</sup>, “Lower 48” Tribes do not have sufficient and guaranteed treaty rights to access land and resources that would sustain their way of life. This is another consequence of settler colonialism and the disruption to our traditional lifeways as we can no longer practice these ways of self-sufficiency as well as our practice of giving by providing for other families in the community.

Making matters worse, climate change, which is also a result of settler colonial, capitalist systems of extractive land and resource use, continues to threaten this traditional way of life. In an article on the impacts of climate change on Tribal traditional foods, Lynn et al. (2013) argues that:

Traditional foods such as fish, game, nuts, fungi, berries, algae, greens, roots, water and seafood provide not only sustenance, but also cultural connections through storytelling, ceremonies, harvesting, processing, and sharing of food resources. Many Tribes strive to maintain a strong, diversified traditional diet and food-related traditions, but are experiencing barriers such as poverty, and changes in ecosystem quality and species

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<sup>26</sup> More of an explanation of subsistence living in Alaska can be found here: <https://www.blm.gov/programs/natural-resources/subsistence>

distribution instigated by pollution, urbanization, policy restrictions to traditional food access, cultural assimilation and climate change... The loss of opportunity to gather traditional foods in Tribal communities is resulting in the denial of their rights to have access to a steady supply of nutritionally balanced, culturally relevant foods. Additionally, the preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge and associated subsistence practices that accompany food acquisition are threatened. As traditional foods are affected by climate change through habitat alterations and changes in the abundance and distribution of species, there is a resulting erosion of traditional practices and knowledge (pgs. 547-548).

### **The Impact of the Indian Relocation Act on Family Safety Nets and Shared Wealth**

While 30% of Native families have remained deeply rooted in their Tribal reservation communities and/or ancestral homelands where they have lived since time immemorial, nearly 70% of Native families have relocated to urban areas in pursuit of educational and economic opportunities. In leaving home, they also left behind trusted networks of support and direct access to gathering food, traditional plants and medicine, and natural resources from the land. This population displacement to cities has also negatively impacted their physical health as outlined in the 2015 “Invisible Tribes” report. This move towards cities was heavily encouraged by the 1953 Urban Relocation Act and is just one example of how colonization interrupted traditional Native economies and Native people’s relationship to their land and natural resources, which was integral to how they experienced abundance and could practice traditional giving.

But when Native people were moved—or were forcibly removed—from their homelands into cities through federal policies like the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, giving between families to the larger urban Indian community became a method of survival in the city. Giving took on new and extended meanings and became a way to offer a new family an extended safety net, which often meant opening your doors and welcoming them into the arms

of a community. Another strand of stories emphasized the importance of generously sharing what you did have access to and could include sharing a meal, providing a safe place to stay temporarily or even long-term, providing stability to families going through hardship, sharing their personal experience and knowledge, and finally giving away more standard resources like money. While growing up in a largely urban Alaska Native community in Ketchikan, Mike Roberts, foundation president, shared his memories:

My mom took us to church, and we put money in the collection plate and things like that, right? But when I think about, like families in need, it was more of this big social safety net of the neighborhood and kind of quasi village we lived in that wasn't really talked about as if we were giving something that somebody was more of our social obligation and how we took care of each other in the neighborhood, right? So I always tell people, you know, I don't think you realize you're poor until you move away from your social safety nets. Like there's always someone to feed us, always someone to help, you know, fix your car, always someone to, you know, take care of kids. And we did the same thing as our family. Right, it was part of what we did, just as the community. And so, I think about like the charitable giving, the giving to need is more of just a societal obligation more than it was an act of charity, or philanthropy. – Mike Roberts, First Nations Development Institute

This idea of Native and Indigenous families creating new social safety nets in urban areas was a familiar theme across those participants who identified as urban Natives. One Cherokee woman shared her experience of growing up in Seattle after her family had relocated to different cities across the generations:

The first thing that comes to mind is giving space and places to stay. I feel like that is something that's been in my family. When before I was born, my mom met my dad, his sister's son was living with him while he was off getting his master's degree on the East Coast. So even before we were kind of more settled as a family, there was that tradition of bringing the family with you as you traveled. And then I remember growing up and having my cousins with us. So we had this more intergenerational household, and then they had babies so I got to grow up with even extra younger cousins. I think that is one way that certainly has stuck out to me. It's just been something very natural in community. But, of course, yeah, it's giving, I guess, a place to stay. But it also feels like the giving

goes both ways, in true reciprocal Native tradition, where then you also get to have the benefit of those extra hands... I think that there's a sense of responsibility. But I would say, again, maybe not the traditional Western sense of that word. But responsibility as we are given the opportunity to be in service to community. That is something that I grew up with. Oh, your cousin needs a place to stay? Of course they can stay with you. But also, in the broader sense of my parents doing a lot of either working with the government or Tribal governments or indirect service kind of roles too, and this idea of giving back as being important and valuable.

As these families grew stronger and more rooted, they found ways to reciprocate and give back to the community as well. Se-ah-dom Edmo, a foundation CEO whose family left the reservation and established a home in Portland shared:

I grew up poor, so my family didn't have much to give. We always gave at blanket dances. I think that's, like, the outward, you know, that was the outward thing that happened at pow wows when families were in need, they have a blanket dance. Like, is that, like, a rent party in the Black community is that we have a blanket dance. I think the most intimate way that I saw it is that we opened our home, so, or my parents opened our home, so we had people living with us who were, like, we have the... we had a Grand Ronde family living with us for a number of years on and off, like, the parents and the sisters and their kids. My parents had foster children. So we didn't have much, but we always shared what we had and then just completely opened our home, which is, I feel, like, even more intimate than giving, than donating money, right? So these are people that oftentimes... and we, I grew up in a house that had, you know, my dad's a recovering alcoholic, and an addict. And so we had rules around not having alcohol or drugs in the house. And so it was always people who wanted to get, you know, to get clean, or get into treatment or start treatment, or were moving off the reservation, you know, to come to Portland in order to get into NARA (Native American Rehabilitation Association) in order to get in. So they would do their intake, or they would just get out of prison or jail. And they, they'd come to our house. And so you know, before, like places like Red Lodge [Transition Services] existed. I mean, my Dad's been to prison. So, he just, he had a place in his, in his heart for people who have been through hard things... But it gave me just a window into you know, people would share, share ideas, and I will say, like, it's been an inspiration for a lot of the work that I've done. Like, I remember there was one... there was one guy who was Yakama who came down and lived with us for a while and [he] was out and gay and homeless. And so he came and lived with us for like a summer or whatever. And we would my parents had a record player, he introduced me to [song] and we would dance in the living room. It was like the funnest, like, you know, gay uncle situation. And you know,

I learned about some of the hard things too about the you know, folks who are coming to stay with us about some of the hard things that they went through because they would just you know, sit at our kitchen table and after a few days just kind of let it all out, and but knew that, you know, wherever they were, they could always come and so their kids came and, you know, people visited and it just it made me feel like it was comforting because you have this idea that no matter what happened, there was always a community there to hold you know matter what you are going through. – Se-ah-dom Edmo, Seeding Justice

Some participants also reflected on how adapting to city life over generations revealed a disconnection from more traditional ways of life, but that they sought out opportunities to reclaim and resurrect that Native spirit of giving. Amid struggle, there was also deep connection that fostered resiliency for these families. An Ojibwe woman who serves a foundation president shared her stories:

I had one auntie, and her house was the place we all gathered. And I can remember, I don't know how old I was either. But I remember my cousin brought a couple of other people... And I can remember my auntie kind of embracing them and getting them food immediately. Like, I can remember the way she hugged them that made me want to be, like, 'Who are they?' because she hugged them with love. And, and you know, then, and then they were just there, and it was just normal. And they were just part of our big crazy family. So, I feel like those moments that [are] probably really important everyday things. I have lots of those kinds of things. So, you know, when you come from a big family, there are always these little moments where people are giving things and sometimes they're big things, sometimes they're little things, but it's not they're not huge. I guess the other one that maybe I'll also say is my aunties were knitters and quilters. Hmm. And a lot of I can remember being disgruntled about these things where I would have to cut the diamonds all the time or cut the strips all the time. And I guess I can like part of why I really love that now is to think about it is that like, you know, a table full of fabric and thread all over the floor was a normal thing in my house. And so, part of why I think it's really interesting is making for somebody else further down the road as, like, always anticipating gifting... And so, I feel, like for me, [I'm] always preparing to be able to gift is something that I [want my kids to know about their mom], that you're stashing stuff. I'm always like well, there's going to be a moment we need to gift so like be prepared for both making things and giving things as [they are] always happening. And I feel like my mom quilting is like just taught me that through and through.

A Pueblo man with decades of experience in philanthropy shared a reflection on how some of these federal policies were designed as efforts to assimilate Native people by breaking up their families. Along with boarding schools, this rupture in stable home life created the modern foster care crisis for Native families. In the traditional way of life, children would be cared for by extended and intergenerational family.

First, the main memory that comes up for me... So, my godparents raised what the person that I knew is their son was actually not their son, their son, the one who I knew is their son. And my, my god brother, was actually... I guess he would be... would have been their great nephew. And there's a long story about that. We don't have time for it. But the basic premise was, there were two children that were more distinct, like distant relatives to them, that ended up in a situation that they were not being well taken care of. And so my, my great aunts, and my godmother, basically... each of them took one of the children and raise them as their own. And that's a very common practice in traditionally, it was a very common practice in Santa Clara, it doesn't happen as much. Now, they have a particular term for a child that's raised in that way. But I thought that that is the main story just because we do a lot of things to give to as, as possible people as to people. But that idea of somebody in need actually kind of got me stuck for a little while. And then that was kind of the one that really jumped out at me. And what it meant to me is, and what it taught me is, is the importance of sort of that sort of selfless care, that I think is an expectation. And that I think has been a crucial reason why our community has survived for so many 1000s of years is you know, it wasn't as if it was through some sort of like foster placement, or formalized system, or if compensation was part it was something that was understood this is what we do when a child is, is in need of care. And, and so I think that that's the story that I think came up for me.

### **Native Giving Practices are Already Reciprocal, Equitable, and Just**

While some of these stories mention giving to someone in (greater) need, everyone is deemed worthy of receiving support with recognition to those who might be prioritized as needing more due to their circumstances.

I farm (and) my kids have all grown up farming with me... But the common practice in our community is when you hunt or when you grow any kind of crop and you begin to enjoy the abundance is to keep a little bit for yourself, but to give more away. And my grandmother would tell me this story [from] when she

was in the boarding school era at Santa Fe Indian School... She would frame it in this way [that White educators taught her that] if you're fortunate to [have] abundance, you should store it right, you should put it away, because then you have something you can use for yourself later. But the logic of that wasn't for us... Last year we had an incident that I've never experienced in farming for almost 30 years, where we had two storm systems literally kind of collide over a section of our fields. And it was really only maybe 10 fields that just got destroyed, including ours, and by sort of wind and hail. And it really set us back, we were able to revive a lot of the plants but we didn't end up with the chile harvest that we were hoping for, we didn't end up getting several things. But as the season went on, we still enjoyed all of these things because people were bringing them to us. Our relatives would give us chile, they would give us squash or melons or whatever. And in that way, we never... we never lost, we were never lacking. Because there was always that reciprocity, that knowing that if you are a group of people who are interdependent... that sharing is not only a crucial value. For others, it's ultimately something that is important for you so that the community... if the more you give to others, the more will be returned to you so that everybody survives.

The beautiful example of reciprocity in this story also reminds me that Indigenous people within the field of philanthropy have also recommended that an additional concept be added to the collective set of core values within Native philanthropy. The International Funders for Indigenous People (IFIP) have proposed that *redistribution* be added to *respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships*. The redistribution of resources is critical within philanthropy as this allows funders like IFIP to move beyond individual acts of giving “to shift towards a just and equitable world... [we] do this through building trust, ensuring Indigenous Peoples are at the decision-making table and directly funding Indigenous led solutions, initiatives and organizations worldwide” (2023). This means that rather than seeing the example of sharing crop harvests as a kind gesture between two neighbors, we see it as a solution that makes redistribution a systemic reality so that none of our neighbors go hungry. This requires that we value our relationships enough to express care for those beyond our immediate family.

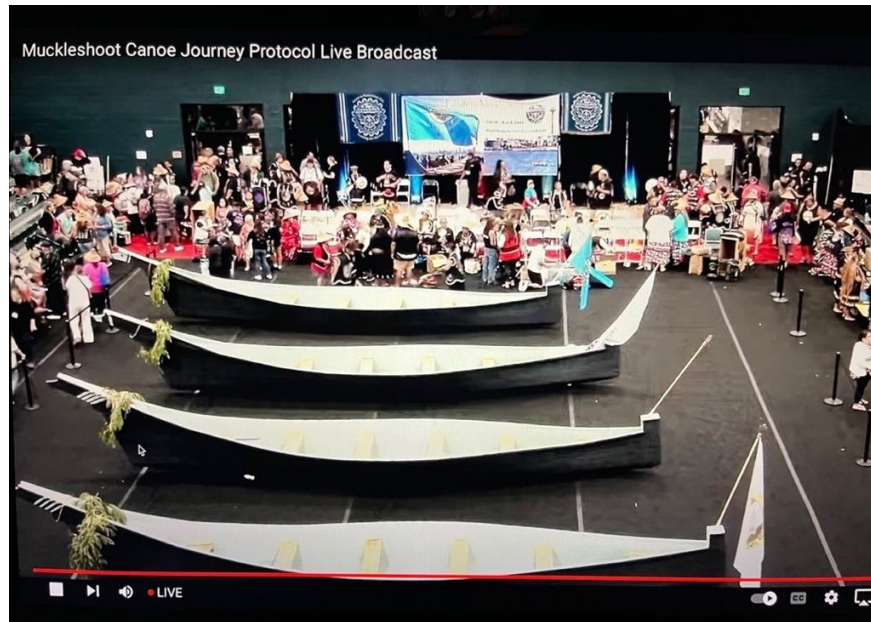
The interdependence of Native communities is something that I've stressed throughout this chapter because it really is the core element of how our families and extended networks of kinship are organized. While mainstream American culture has been built on the myths of rugged individualism and fierce independence, Native people have always known that we are just part of a larger ecosystem of relationships. As NDN Collective Director of Policy & Advocacy Jade Begay reflected on her piece on Independence Day in 2019: "In this time we need to be more interdependent than we've ever been. The lack of recognizing our interdependence will only lead to more separation. Being able to see humanity's interdependence not just with humans but with our non-human relatives, such as water, land, animals, plants, will lead to us living in better harmony with the world around us." When Native people refer to "all my relations," they are acknowledging their humble place within a complex web of relationships that is more expansive than just humans. According to the Native view, this interdependence – and being in relationship with one another – is part of what makes us wealthy.

### **What is Wealth?**

#### **Figure 7**

*Four cedar canoes await the gifting ceremony by the Muckleshoot Tribe at the close of Paddle to Muckleshoot*

Note. Photo credit: Muckleshoot Canoe Journey Protocol Live Feed, August 6, 2023



In the summer of 2023, I attended the canoe journey landing and celebration that was hosted by the Muckleshoot Tribe. It was the first intertribal journey since 2019 and prior to the pandemic and it felt like a reunion for all the canoe families. On the final day of the cultural sharing, it is customary for the host Tribe to share gifts back with the community much like a traditional potlatch. While I was not in the crowd on that particular day, I've witnessed similar moments like this over the years that I've been a canoe puller. As I streamed the final hours of the 2023 Paddle to Muckleshoot from home, my attention piqued when they began to carry out four cedar canoes. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with cedar canoes, they are carved from old growth cedar trees and weigh hundreds of pounds. It takes 10-16 strong people to lift and carry a canoe, so imagine for a moment what a procession of four canoes coming through the doors and onto a crowded gymnasium floor looks like. It's simply breathtaking.

For the next hour, Muckleshoot Tribal leaders gave away these canoes to the Puyallup, Nisqually, Steilacoom, and Squaxin Island Tribes who are also part of the 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek<sup>27</sup> and have served as neighbors and close allies<sup>28</sup> over the past hundred years. Muckleshoot acknowledged that these Tribes have consistently supported them in fighting for their land, waters, and fishing rights. One of the leaders from Nisqually shared what it meant to them to receive one of these canoes: “The Nisqually Tribe is so thankful to Muckleshoot Nation for their precious gift of a canoe and the connection it represents between the families of the Medicine Creek Treaty nations. We are grateful for the extraordinary graciousness of Muckleshoot as hosts of Canoe Journey 2023. By adding canoes, new generations will carry on this important tradition where language and songs are learned to sustain culture and the people. Our connections are strengthened each time we gather.”

As I shared in earlier chapters, this kind of Native giving is not a new concept and follows the ceremony of the potlatch. Within potlatch traditions, a Tribe’s wealth was measured by how much they give away to their neighboring communities, rather than how much they keep for themselves. This was directly at odds with the capitalist economic systems that settlers were trying to instill in Native people and along with other religious ceremonial practices, the potlatch was banned in Canada in 1883.<sup>29</sup> This led to a loss of knowledge including language, songs, and culture around this practice. Coast Salish Tribes are still trying to revitalize their practices through gatherings like the canoe journey.

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<sup>27</sup> For more on the 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek, please see:

<https://americanindian.si.edu/static/nationtonation/pdf/Medicine-Creek-Treaty-1854.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Please see the Puyallup Tribe’s history for more context: [http://puyallup-tribe.com/ourtribe/?fbclid=IwAR33BTEnxgl61549ssaqqzFN-n5EvuFyTbdjr3\\_6Ic3NLp1FoEoRjwEyOX0](http://puyallup-tribe.com/ourtribe/?fbclid=IwAR33BTEnxgl61549ssaqqzFN-n5EvuFyTbdjr3_6Ic3NLp1FoEoRjwEyOX0)

<sup>29</sup> For more on the Canadian potlatch bans, see: [https://umistapotlatch.ca/potlatch\\_interdire-potlatch\\_ban-eng.php#:~:text=In%20the%20late%201800s%2C%20the,became%20law%20January%201%2C%201885.](https://umistapotlatch.ca/potlatch_interdire-potlatch_ban-eng.php#:~:text=In%20the%20late%201800s%2C%20the,became%20law%20January%201%2C%201885.)

Many of these stories of Native giving are rooted in traditional economies that did not rely on capitalism or Western notions of wealth. Instead, they embodied the concept of Indigenous wealth. The Native Governance Center developed a 2022 report that defines Indigenous wealth as “decolonizing and revitalizing what it means to be healthy and live in abundance.” They emphasize that Indigenous wealth is shared and that “when we have access to shared wealth, we can restore the health of our communities and nations.” Indigenous wealth is inclusive of language revitalization, food sovereignty, community wellness, and reconnection to land.

Another definition of Native giving that we can learn from comes from NDN Collective’s “Collective Abundance” grant initiative’s community engagement process that yielded the following definition of what it means from a Native perspective to be wealthy or live a life of abundance:

The consensus from community engagement is that a reliable livelihood or a life of abundance can be achieved by **feeling safe and secure** in the ability to meet your and your family's needs, specifically without working multiple jobs. Ultimately, abundance is **having time for participation in cultural traditions and ceremonies, to share and preserve Indigenous knowledge for future generations** (pg. 6).

Furthermore, this definition does not stress individual wealth, but rather community wealth that is, again, based on relationships:

Indigenous wealth is a quality of life and mindset that encircles family and community well-being and the care of relationships (self, family, extended family, community, land, environment), and a spirit of generosity. Money is a tool to support basic needs (safety, food, shelter, education) and bring financial security and self-determination so that one can live a “good life,” abundant in social and cultural sharing (pg. 6).

Notice how this definition does not equate money with wealth. Money is seen as a tool that helps people to meet their basic needs and allow for a greater quality of life. This insight has helped me to understand why some foundations like Perigee Fund are partnering with urban Native organizations in Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services in Seattle to implement grantmaking for individuals in the form of guaranteed basic income payments. Launched in 2023 and based on early childhood research, Perigee understood that poverty has a disproportionate impact on maternal and child health, and that by supporting Indigenous families with up to \$45,000, split into monthly payments over their child's first three years, they could make a profound difference in family health outcomes. As an additional example, I've been particularly inspired by how NDN Collective has continued to center and build their grantmaking to better meet Native families and communities where they are at.

**What Does it Mean to Reclaim Philanthropy & Re-center Native Giving in Respect, Reciprocity, Relationships, and Communal Responsibility?**

Launched in 2023, NDN Collective's Collective Abundance grant opportunity<sup>30</sup> is an innovative way to let Native communities in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota direct their own solutions towards building generational wealth and "redefine wealth on Indigenous terms in order to build a life of abundance." In 2021, NDN Collective received \$50 million dollars from the Bush Foundation along with Nexus Community Partners who also received \$50 million to redistribute in African American communities. The Bush Foundation created this \$100 million dollar Community Trust Fund Foundation after internal strategy conversations after

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<sup>30</sup> To learn more about NDN Collective's Collective Abundance grant fund, please see: <https://grants.ndncollective.org/collective-abundance-fund/>

being influenced by the book, *Decolonizing Wealth* (Villanueva, 2018), to give 10% of their endowment toward a reparative grantmaking framework. In their press release, they explained their motive:

We believe the community trust funds are a powerful way to address the pervasive racial wealth gaps in our region. Those gaps are the result of generations of unjust policies targeting Native and Black communities. There are direct through lines from broken treaties to unemployment rates, slavery to incarceration rates, redlining to homeownership rates. NDN Collective and Nexus understand this reality, and they have the talent, creativity, and commitment to use these community trust funds for reparative action” (Bush Foundation, 2021).

To date, this remains one of the largest investments made to shifting foundation endowment wealth toward creating generational wealth for Black and Native communities. It has the potential to shift the narrative away from generic poverty reduction strategies toward examining the root causes of why Black and Native communities have systemically been denied the opportunity to build intergenerational wealth since the inception of colonization and introduction of Trans-Atlantic slavery. By naming the racial wealth gap for what it is, the Bush Foundation is influencing other foundations to rethink the ways that they have been addressing economic justice strategies for communities of color who have been historically and systemically kept from accumulating wealth.

In their recently released 2023 Impact report, the grantmaking arm of the NDN Collective explicitly formed its grantmaking arm to “rematriate wealth back to Indigenous hands. We seek to honor and resource our Peoples’ prosperity and self- determination by using grantmaking as a temporary tool for community organizing, development, and movement and power building. We believe that our work toward justice and liberation will end its necessity.” In this model of grantmaking, a foundation does not seek to exist in perpetuity but instead

seeks to temporarily shift resources towards community-led solutions until those needs are fully met because the system has changed to become more just, and communities are better resourced. This is just one of the critiques of the philanthropy sector that I will more fully explore in the next chapter.

### **What We've Learned About Native Giving**

To close, I will summarize the most salient points that I covered in this chapter that help delineate my argument:

- 1) Native giving predates the sector of philanthropy and is more than a method of redistribution of resources, but a way of life.
- 2) Native giving was not based on deficit models and “demonstrated need” but is already reciprocal, equitable, and just. This chapter seeks to advance an extended theory of “desire-based giving” building on Tuck’s theory of “desire-based research.”
- 3) The ability of Native people to give to one another is also tied to their relationship to land, water, and natural resources, which is why the Land Back movement is so critical to our ability to sustain our traditional way of life.
- 4) This chapter helped to expand our definition of “wealth” by comparing two different definitions of Native wealth that stress relationality and collective abundance.
- 5) The chapter ends with an example of how foundations like The Bush Foundation, in partnership with NDN Collective, can learn from Native giving and seek to redistribute endowment funds towards building generational wealth by addressing the root causes of poverty such as the racial wealth gap.

In the next chapter, entitled “Critiques of Philanthropy”, we will continue to contrast the values and practices of Native giving with how the sector of philanthropy works. I will reveal how power is embedded at every level of philanthropy and that the sector needs major overhauling rather than reforming. I will also introduce how capitalism works to uphold the worst aspects of philanthropy through *philanthrocapitalism*, which has enabled billionaires to believe that they are best positioned to solve the world’s complex problems with approaches that reinforce capitalism, since that is the same economic system that yielded them success, power, and financial wealth. Lastly, I will make the case that we need to challenge the sector of philanthropy – and larger society – to learn and adopt these teachings so that Native people and lands can have possible futures that ultimately benefit all people.

## Chapter 5: Critiques of Philanthropy from Native Leaders and Allies in the Field

### What Philanthropy Does Not Understand About Equity & Justice

In the last chapter we learned about Native traditions of giving and how equity is centered in the ways that community members distribute food and other resources to others. Fisherman and hunters are mindful of community members who need a more equitable (and not necessarily equal) share, given their unique situation and potential for vulnerability. For example, elders and widows who are not able to hunt for themselves would receive a greater share than those who have the ability to hunt and gather for themselves. In contrast, institutional philanthropy has been grappling with the concepts of equity—particularly racial equity—since its inception, a struggle that has only intensified over the past two decades. An article in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Putnam-Walkerly & Russell, 2016) describes how the field was struggling to define equity in relation to the principles of diversity and inclusion, and how it looked to public health equity definitions as a starting place. One of the program officers they interviewed shared this insight: “The fact is that we don’t know what equity looks like as a society, because we’ve never actually had it.” That might be true for dominant society because it has been structured to uphold institutional racism and inequality, but, as I showed in the last chapter, that’s not the way that all communities function. In this chapter I will weave my analysis of trends in the philanthropy sector’s enactment of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments with critiques based on the lived experiences of my study participants around DEI commitments in their places of work.

During the interviews that I conducted with Native leaders and allies working in the field of philanthropy, I posed several questions that were meant to peel back the surface layer of the

sector. I asked about their perceptions about how power is structured in philanthropy; what things they would change about the way the sector operates; and if they had a story to share about the hardest thing that they had to reconcile within their career. The insights and the stories that unfolded form the basis of this chapter where we begin to dig into a set of critiques about the philanthropy sector. While there are several themes that emerge, I will argue that many of them center around philanthropy's inability to understand what equity truly means in practice: to trust; to yield power and control; to recognize the sociocultural aspects and historical events experienced by different communities of color, and how that has impacted them; and at its greatest potential—to commit to justice, restoration, and healing through giving so that we can right the harms of the past.

I want to exemplify this argument by sharing a story that emerged from one of the interviews with a Native leader of a Northwest health foundation. Earlier in her career she served as an executive director for a Native American social services organization that serves Portland's urban Native community. It was in this role that she encountered a very painful experience while attempting to partner with a large institutional foundation that wanted to pilot a poverty reduction strategy for urban Native communities. While most of the participants in this study sought anonymity because of the unequal power dynamics that work to silence<sup>31</sup> those who have encountered the most problematic aspects of the sector, Nichole Maher wrote about her experience with the Northwest Area Foundation (NAAF) in 2006 in a nationally-circulated philanthropy publication so that others in the field might learn from this experience

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<sup>31</sup> In our interview, Nichole clarified that while she is named as the single author of the NCRP Quarterly article, other Urban Native community leaders shared their experiences. However, all other groups were forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement as part of a "tie-off" grant.

and recognize how they are likely perpetuating harm in their relationships with Native-led organizations.

**Figure 8**

*Spring 2006 issue of NCRP's publication with side-by-side accounts of Northwest Area Foundation's failed Urban Indian Community Ventures project.*



While the article outlines the many mistakes that NWAFF made in developing and implementing their Urban Indian Communities (UIC) Ventures project, which sought to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, at the heart of the conflict was a fundamental difference in how the foundation and the cohort of urban Indian organizations defined the causes and solutions to poverty. While the foundation provided seed funding over a two-year period for four urban Indian organizations to develop a strategic plan as part of a larger funding

application process, ultimately NWAF did not trust the Native plan and did not fund the project.

Nichole describes how this unfolded:

The biggest reason for NWAF not funding the UIC strategic plan may have been the definition of poverty. Ironically, it stems from an occasion when authority was released by NWAF to arrive at a community-created definition of poverty. Most Native Americans do not define poverty in dollars and cents. Poverty is measured by one's ability to exist. To practice your culture. To speak your language. To get a fair and quality education. To be sufficiently housed. To not have to choose between medicine and food. And that was how we defined poverty for the UIC Ventures project. The proposed strategic plan efforts to reduce poverty then emanated from this definition. The plan we produced included efforts to improve education, health, and housing, as well as employment and economic development. In hindsight, it is possible to conclude that all NWAF really wanted was the economic development component. One is left to wonder if an assumption had been made by NWAF that everyone interpreted poverty in pretty much the same way and that the remedies were equally as obvious (pg. 11-12).

The article also goes on to describe how the unequal power dynamics between this funder and its potential grant partners was a major factor because it prevented honest feedback from being shared back to the foundation in real time. Poor communication, unclear and unrealistic expectations, a lack of understanding about cross-cultural relations, and the foundation's inability to acknowledge and trust in urban Native communities' power, expertise, and capacity to develop a strategic plan also played into the failure of this venture. Lastly, there is also a lesson to be learned within this story about foundations' tendencies to be prescriptive about what are the "right solutions", which directly correlates to whether a grant will be awarded. When "community-led" solutions don't adhere to these (often) unspoken—usually Western and racial settler capitalist—theories of change, foundations may not fund a project even after they are deep into the relationship building required for a prospective partnership.

As the image of this issue of *Responsive Philanthropy* depicts, Northwest Area Foundation's President and CEO Karl N. Stauber authored a counternarrative that tells their

side of the story. In his version of the events, there was not a lack of clarity in the process but rather a misalignment between the community-driven plan and the foundation's desired outcomes. Specifically, he writes, the plan was not funded for implementation because: "1) the plan did not clarify how the proposed activities will achieve long-term poverty reduction; 2) did not present a clear connection between planned activities and direct benefits to low-income members of the urban Indian community; and 3) did not align with four community-level outcomes that the foundation believes are necessary for long-term poverty reduction" (Stauber, 2006, pg. 7).

As one can surmise from the philanthro-speak, there was not just a gulf of misunderstanding between both parties' perceptions of the overarching goals and desired outcomes of the project, but also in what it means for a process to be community-led. Nichole argues in her piece that the foundation continued to assure the cohort that they had the power to draft a plan to meet the needs of their communities, but once submitted, this plan was deemed inadequate. As a result, all four urban Native communities lost out on the possibility of a grant award of \$14 million dollars over a 10-year period and the opportunity to pilot a larger grantmaking strategy that could have impacted 30 urban Native cities within NWA's eight state region.

In my interview with Nichole, she shared the same closing sentiment that she shared with readers back in 2006. "The last thing I would add is the starting point and belief about people in communities. In a lot of my work, I have referenced and quoted this idea: 'the people are beautiful already'. The orientation that people are enough and actually have all the things—they have all the capacities and faculties—that they need. And that you know, we don't need a

hero or a savior to come and fix us.” She also shared with me an article she wrote in the June 2020 issue of the National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy also called “The People are Already Beautiful”. She echoes her continued frustration with philanthropy by writing to an audience of other foundation leaders challenging them to do more during the height of the pandemic:

Modern philanthropy’s promise was to make the world a better place. Billions of dollars later, philanthropy has done a lot of good and perpetuated the disparities we see in health, education, employment and other areas of well-being. Our sector was founded by dynasties of white families who believed wealth equaled expertise. Our professional inheritance is tied to this worldview and how it lives on in the way we operate today. What we now have is the legacy of our decisions: decisions on who gets funding (overwhelmingly white-led institutions), what issues are worth funding (without naming racism as a root cause), which prescriptive strategies to fund (instead of trusting community-designed solutions) and how to measure success (usually through a Eurocentric framework). In recent years, we have taken best-selling critiques about philanthropy in stride – nodding in agreement as we launched book clubs, joined panel discussions, appeared on podcasts and drafted op-eds. The word ‘equity’ has become ubiquitous, flowing freely from our speeches, annual reports, mission statements and funding strategies, signaling what we have a deeper understanding of the world around us. The dollars have not flowed to match our words. Numerous reports show funding for specific racial and ethnic communities have either stagnated or decreased; and the 1,000 largest foundations in the U.S. gave only 10% to communities of color. The subtext? Philanthropy knows better than community; that people who talk about equity know how to advance it – not the communities experiencing inequities every day (pg. 11-12).

If this statement feels like it’s a chastising to colleagues in the field, it is because it is. In the fourteen years since first penning an article to criticize the way that philanthropy operates, Nichole remains one of the boldest voices in the sector. But now she has the power to do things differently and lead change in the sector because she serves as the CEO of the Inatai

Foundation (formerly Group Health Foundation) with assets of \$2.2 billion dollars<sup>32</sup> and nearly \$64 million in grantmaking in Washington state in 2022. Since 2019, Inatai has awarded \$200 million with racial equity firmly centered in their theory of change. As it proudly claims: “more than 80% of the organizations we fund are led by Black, Indigenous, and people of color”<sup>33</sup>. And her core motivations remain rooted in the communities she is a part of and has served. In the 2006 article, one of the things she continuously stresses as a harm inflicted by the Northwest Area Foundation is that they lived up to the cautious warnings of the elders and crushed the dreams of the Native youth who were involved in the process. Nichole’s anger isn’t situated in her own ego or personal frustration with foundation processes, it’s based in the profound sense of disappointment that the foundation let down entire urban Indian communities - including ones that Nichole loves and is a part of.

This chapter also embodies the Native tradition of truth telling<sup>34</sup> in Indigenous-led truth and reconciliation movements, which emphasize truth always, but in a way that is as loving as possible. If philanthropy literally means “for love of the people”, I implore upon my colleagues the need to show up in a more authentic and caring way – and leverage their power to commit to funding significantly more. We are in a particularly dire moment of combined crises that includes a worldwide health pandemic, urgent global climate change, racial reckoning, and worsening income inequality and deepening poverty. Lastly, I want to challenge the philanthropy sector to not just aspire to equity but to go deeper in its analysis to actually name

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<sup>32</sup> Recent financial documents including the 2021 form 990 can be found on the Inatai Foundation’s website: <https://inatai.org/faq/>

<sup>33</sup> For more about Inatai Foundation and its giving, please see their 2022 Grantmaking Report: <https://inatai.org/2022-grantmaking-report/>

<sup>34</sup> Truth telling is a term that has been used by Indigenous people within Truth & Reconciliation movements in Canada & Australia. For more context, please see: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/truth-telling/>

racial equity and racial justice<sup>35</sup> as part of their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks, policies, and grantmaking strategies across all their portfolios.

### **Critiques of the Philanthropy Sector**

This next section of the chapter outlines the major themes that the research participants shared with me during our interviews. Most of these themes also show up in sector reports, philanthropy publications, and within conference sessions. But some of these emerged as a result of trusted relationships with me—as a Native American researcher who also holds the positionality of an insider because of my firsthand experience in the field. When I first started my career in philanthropy, I noticed a pattern of relatively safe topics in speeches that were happening in conference plenary spaces, but I also noticed that there were more subversive threads of conversation happening in the hallways or lounges, where colleagues networked and sometimes whispered their observations about the field as if they were confessions. It was in these spaces that I began to understand the difference between what philanthropy claims to do versus its actual track record of progress. While the following themes are in no particular order of importance, I will try to weave together a larger argument about how these criticisms are really about the ways in which power is structured in the sector and how philanthropy continues to uphold institutional racism and its roots within settler colonialism and extractive capitalism while it claims to center racial equity.

***Critique 1: Foundations are not making a strong enough commitment to implement diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI) principles and to move needed resources to BIPOC communities.***

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<sup>35</sup> For more in-depth definitions of “racial equity” and “racial justice”, please see the section of this chapter that describes philanthropy’s inadequate commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.

Part of the complexity within the philanthropy sector is that it is challenged to implement DEI principles in both its internal operations and in its grantmaking commitments. A recent article by Candid, which helps collect philanthropic giving data, builds the argument that philanthropy is actually well-positioned to make a deep commitment to DEI as it has historically funded progressive social movements like the Civil Rights Era for decades. However, Mercado (2023) also points out that there is a difference between implementing DEI principles internally within the foundation and through the grantmaking processes. In order to be most impactful, foundations need to commit to changing both. However, one of my research participants, with a wide vantage point of the field from 20 years of experience, including serving as the past executive director of CHANGE Philanthropy, revealed that, from her approximation, only 20% of foundations are “in that evolutionary phase of better practice” by actually making the changes necessary to implement DEI practices. Approximately 40% aspire to implement DEI into their organization but are still in the beginning stages of their learning journey and are figuring out a few smaller components.

Especially given the racial reckoning of 2020 sparked by the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, that is simply insufficient. The sector needs accountability to the statements of solidarity and pledges for change and institutional support that many foundations promised in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. One of the participants that I interviewed was among the first people of color to be hired at the family foundation she worked for. She pointed to her lived experience not just as a Black woman but as someone who had experienced poverty and hardships and used that knowledge to inform her ways of thinking about how to implement DEI principles in the grantmaking. She also shared the story

about how her foundation came to the decision to commit to moving \$50 million over the next 10 years under her leadership as a senior program officer. However, part of why the foundation made this bold commitment was because she was the only Black staff member working there at the time and brought a much-needed perspective at a moment when they internally grappled with how best to respond:

You know, I definitely felt like [the foundation] was resting on their laurels when I came in because they had already been giving between 8% - 10% of their corpus. So they were above the 5% [and] they already gave multi-year general operating funds. That wasn't their full portfolio, but they did do that for some of their grants. So they definitely were like, 'Oh, we're amazing'. And then I started asking questions when we started reading the grants and then getting to where we're making selections. I was like, 'Well how many of these organizations are led by people of color?' And they're like, 'I don't know. Well, if we count the people of color-led organization, we should also count the rural ones'. I'm like, 'This isn't like a competition. But this is just a question I'm asking because you talk about how you promote a just society'. And [I was] really starting to shift that stuff and starting to look at who we're giving funds to. We gave these larger grants to larger institutions like Seattle Foundation, Philanthropy Northwest, and organizations like that. And we also gave the Social Justice Fund, and I'm like, 'Why is Social Justice Fund receiving less than Seattle Foundation? Like this is the only one that's led by a person of color (at the time)'. So I'm like, 'We have some work to do.'

This strong commitment to racial equity became even more urgent when the “twin pandemics” converged in the summer of 2020. During our interview she shared the sense of isolation she felt among her colleagues as she felt the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement in deeper and more personal ways than they could imagine:

And then after being there a couple of years - and honestly, Dana – it was when George Floyd - when that happened in 2020. And, also, COVID. I had lost three family members to COVID rather quickly, like [one in] March and two in April. These were people who were Black men - all of them professionals, you know. I mean, they weren't really health compromised or anything. So, it was... it was very real. And to the board and the staff, they felt sad. [With] COVID it was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is really sad.' And I was, like, “No, this is impacting Black and Indigenous people at higher rates. And it is not because we're going outside

more or not wearing our masks. There is something in our bodies. And I feel like y'all don't see that.' And then George Floyd[s murder] happened. And I was, like, in physical pain. Like I could not hold this anymore. And so, I'd be on calls and be crying. And I'm like, 'I need y'all... I need y'all to try to embody this in some way. Like, not just look at this in the abstract, like, I am here. And I've lost these people. And now George Floyd is happening. And this is how this has impacted me because I was, like, it's not just this one incident. This is years and years of everything... and we're realizing the reason. Black and Indigenous folks are dying at this rate is because of everything y'all have done over hundreds, thousands of years.' So, I would literally start every call [with our board] with, 'Oh, how's it going? Oh, good. But you know, without the attempted genocide of Indigenous people and stolen land and the free labor on the backs of Black bodies, we don't get here. So, how's your day? We have to acknowledge this, like no one could match this kind of wealth without these conditions that y'all created. And because of those conditions, it's killing us. It is killing us.' So we would have these calls. And a lot of the board was, like, 'Just tell us what to fund... '[And my response was] 'No, you need to hear this.' And I'm like in tears. And I was, like, 'This is really painful. And I can't just be here if y'all don't want to really be in this work. So, we need real commitments – like, you don't get to just put on your website [that] Black Lives Matter. I'm a Black life. How do I matter? You know, I need you to show up.

With this kind of truth-telling about the settler colonial, racist, and capitalist conditions that created wealth—and how detrimental that legacy has been for Black and Indigenous people—she went on to tell me how she was able to mobilize the staff and board of trustees to not just consider making a substantial commitment of \$50 million over the next decade, but to think strategically about how to deploy those funds. Rather than divide the funding evenly over ten years with an annual \$5 million budget, she convinced them to think tactically about how to fund the movement by front-loading the funding in the first few years to sustain the building momentum. I share this story because it really helps to exemplify the urgency in implementing DEI principles throughout philanthropy and how that can result in serving communities of color more equitably. It also shows what is possible when foundations hire a more diverse staff who

can bring their lived experience to the workplace and passionately argue for moving resources when and where they are needed the most.

Aside from diversifying the workplace and strategy, many of the participants I interviewed also wanted inclusion, meaning they want a significant culture change within their institutions so that the sector is “no longer dominated by white professionalism” and white supremacist culture. One queer Latine participant who has worked at a philanthropy consulting firm and an institutional foundation stepped away from the field when they realized that the culture of these spaces was changing who they are and the kind of values that they hold. They now work as an independent consultant focused on program evaluation and can see clearly that “we need to disrupt the logics of domination, patriarchy, aggression, and competition” that are so prevalent across the sector. Other participants spoke to the desire for “the recognition that philanthropy has played a role in creating and upholding systemic racism” and has a responsibility to now undo those systems of oppression. Still others spoke about their continued frustration that philanthropy has been talking about its commitment to DEI for years now but has yet to transform itself. “Stop talking about change and just do it,” as one participant says, echoing the impatience of scores of BIPOC professionals in the field. Lastly, it’s extremely discouraging to observe that some foundations seem to be back-peddling on their DEI commitments in the months after the Supreme Court decision<sup>36</sup> on affirmative action, even though they haven’t been directly challenged by a lawsuit. This is a common practice among

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<sup>36</sup> In reference to the 2023 Supreme Court decision on Affirmative Action, please see: [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199\\_hgdj.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf)

foundations that I've heard about in recent months at philanthropy conferences, and it belies not just a lack of commitment but a lack of courage.

However, in one example of brave leadership, in preparation for the Supreme Court's decision, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation released a memo based on a commissioned law firm's study of the issue and how it might impact giving to nonprofits, and the ability of philanthropy to "make grants that aim to benefit people of a specific race no matter what the outcome".<sup>37</sup> Their lawyers argue that in a worst-case scenario, the Internal Revenue Service could "terminate a group's charity status if its efforts to support diversity were viewed as discriminatory. That would mean a nonprofit couldn't, for example, make a grant specifically to benefit people based on their race and keep its tax-exempt status". But they also felt that the IRS would not take that position under the current administration. Other lawyers believe that "foundations would be in a strong position to challenge any lawsuits... they could argue that grants are not the same as contracts and therefore don't have to follow federal laws on discrimination" (Gene Takagi as cited in Daniels, 2023). Again, much of this is speculative as the philanthropy sector has not yet faced any legal challenges in its efforts to implement DEI into its grantmaking strategies. It's not an unfounded fear, though, because in October 2023 the conservative-backed American Alliance for Equal Rights successfully sued the Fearless Fund, a Black woman-owned venture capital firm that was awarding grant funds to Black-owned

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<sup>37</sup> Hewlett Foundation's legal memo is referenced and analyzed in this Chronicle of Philanthropy story: <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/supreme-court-could-set-back-philanthropys-racial-diversity-efforts-with-affirmative-action-ruling?sra=true>

businesses<sup>38</sup>. This decision resulted in the funding program that benefitted Black woman-owned businesses being halted.

***Critique 2: Philanthropy has not been transparent enough about its grantmaking data, giving priorities, decision-making processes, or its efforts to diversify its giving towards BIPOC-led organizations.***

While some foundations might take the approach of being quieter about their giving in the coming months and years to operate under the radar of conservative scrutiny, the truth is that many are already doing so. Those seeking information by looking on foundation websites for reports on their annual giving, lists of grant partners, or data that might reveal patterns in their grantmaking, might be challenged to locate all this data. There is a lack of transparent grantmaking data across the sector that could help us to answer such critical questions as: Where is the money going? What proportion is going towards supporting BIPOC communities? Who benefits from these grants? How is the grantmaking data collected? For what purpose is it collected and shared? What flaws might exist in the data? What progress have foundations made in their racial equity and DEI goals?

While private, public, and family foundations are required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to disclose the recipients of their grants through the Form 990 federal tax return, the information is limited to nonprofit names, addresses, grant award amount, and a short description of the purpose of the grant. However, the general public may not be aware of how to search for 990s, or how to read them to mine for the information they are seeking. This also

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<sup>38</sup> For more context about the Fearless Fund lawsuit, please see: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/black-entrepreneurs-dei-efforts-face-complaints-lawsuits-racial-discri-rcna118679>

makes it difficult to track and compare this data across the sector. The nonprofit Candid, which is the result of a 2019 merger between Foundation Center and GuideStar, does use 990 data to simultaneously help foundations research nonprofits and nonprofits to find funding using their foundation directory. While they provide the philanthropic sector with research reports, including national data on giving for Native Americans in partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy<sup>39</sup>, their main purpose is not to serve as the watchdog of the sector nor to hold foundations accountable to their DEI goals.

Mike Roberts, from First Nations Development Institute, who has been in the field for more than 30 years, shared that one of his biggest concerns is the lack of transparency in foundation giving—especially over the past 15-20 years. Without transparency, how can we be assured of foundations’ measurable efforts to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion within the program staff, executive leadership, board of trustees, and grant partners supported? He suggested that perhaps it is time for some serious structural reform and governmental regulation of the philanthropy sector. This would not be the first time that there has been a call to regulate philanthropy. In 2005, the Greenlining Institute proposed legislation called “The Foundation Diversity & Transparency Act” (A.B. 624)<sup>40</sup> in the state of California. It wasn’t successfully passed, but it would have required foundations to share more data with the public about where foundation grants are invested and whether minority<sup>41</sup> communities are receiving

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<sup>39</sup> Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy have partnered to produce the report “Investing in Native Communities”, which can be found at: <https://nativephilanthropy.candid.org>

<sup>40</sup> See the background context and proposed 2005 legislation of A.B. 624 at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20101125075907/http://greenlining.org/resources/pdfs/AB624CommunityResponsetoDiversityAttacks.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> This term is quite dated and wasn’t even accurate in 2005 as part of the justification for the legislation was that the historically underserved communities of color were becoming the majority but foundation giving had yet to catch up to the changing demographics.

an equitable share. While foundations were invited to participate in these hearings, only three chose to, which also reveals the resistance of the sector to willingly participate in efforts to make the field more transparent.

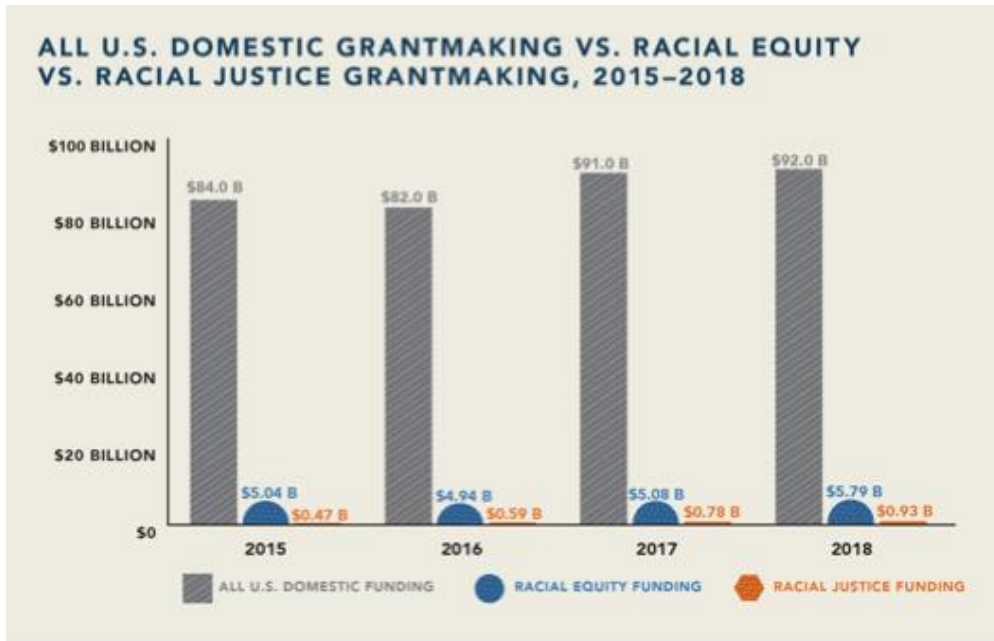
The nonprofit organization the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) does serve as “watchdog” of the sector and has analyzed data on racial equity and racial justice funding. Their most recent report, which was released in September 2021, assesses data from 2015-2018 and has some preliminary analysis from the pivotal year of 2020. The authors make the important distinction that “most reports have focused on the dollar amounts *pledged* for racial equity by foundations and corporations. This report looks only at **actual confirmed grants awarded**” (Cyril, Kan, Maulbeck, Villarosa, 2021, pg. 4). This is critical to track as we saw during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 that foundations and corporations were quick to respond by posting statements of solidarity and pledging support, but there are people in the sector, including many of my participants, who remain skeptical about whether those pledges will ever be realized.

Indeed, between 2015 and 2018, only \$5.97 billion went to racial equity, and an even smaller amount of \$0.93 billion went to racial justice initiatives. This might seem like a lot of money but the total philanthropic grantmaking for 2018 was \$92 billion dollars.

### **Figure 9**

*All U.S. Domestic Grantmaking vs Racial Equity vs Racial Justice Grantmaking, 2015-2018*

Note. Website infographic of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity report “Mismatched: Philanthropy’s Response to the Call of Racial Justice” (2021).



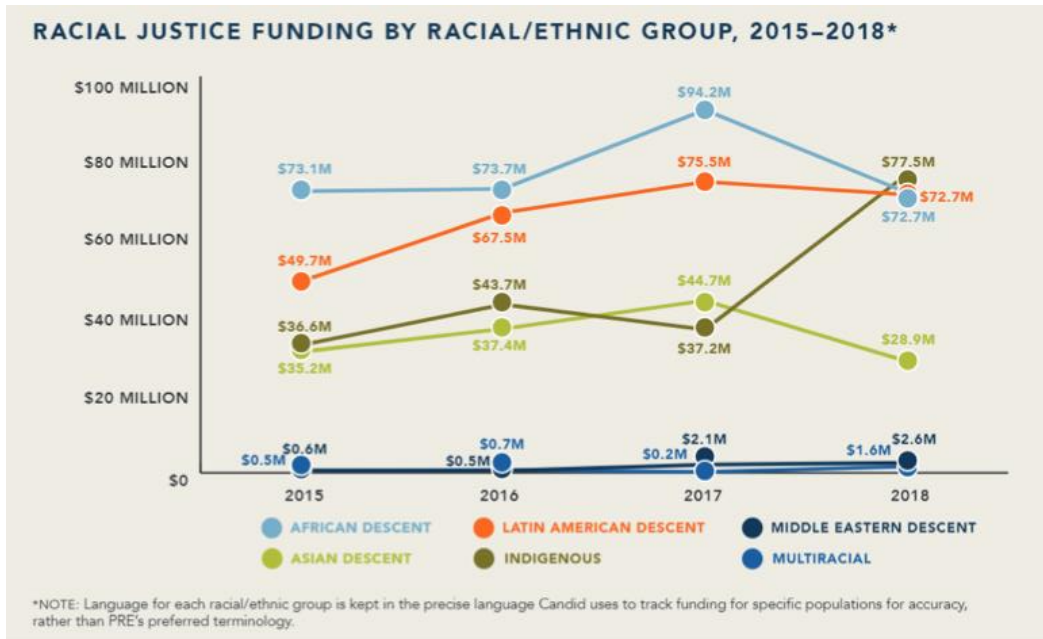
PRE also disaggregated the 2015-2018 data set to reveal the funding by racial/ethnic group. For the 2018 year, it shows that funding for Indigenous people was actually above that of funding for those of African descent (\$72.7 million) and Latin American descent (\$72.7 million) at \$77.5 million.

**Figure 10**

*Racial justice funding by racial/ethnic group, 2015-2018*

Note. Image credit: website infographic of the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity report

“Mismatched: Philanthropy’s Response to the Call of Racial Justice” (2021)



The authors attribute this significant increase in funding from 2017 to 2018 to the support that foundations granted to Native Americans to support protests and legal fights during the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's fight to protect their sacred lands from the Dakota Access Pipeline construction and the larger Water is Life movement. However, as they also note:

Surges in funding at key moments in time aren't enough to win lasting and transformative change. Eventually, and often quite quickly, investments receded or fail to keep up with growth so that a larger pie also has to feed more people. Soon, grantees are back to scraping by even as their field grows rapidly, while white billionaires operationalize their own solutions using their own funds *and* the additional donors to whom they have disproportional access (Cyril, Kan, Maulbeck, Villarosa, 2021, pg. 21).

Finally, when analyzing the data that they did have access to in 2020, the authors reveal that:

While Candid identified more than \$8.8 billion in pledges for racial equity work in 2020, as of the summer of 2021 it had identified only about \$3.4 billion in actual grants awarded by foundations and corporations – a 30 percent decrease

compared to the \$5.8 billion of racial equity funding in 2018, though many funders had not yet submitted their 2020 grants data to Candid. It is likely that when reporting on 2020 funding is complete, the total dollars devoted to racial equity will show an increase over prior years, but less than that implied by initial estimated summaries of pledges drawn from press releases and newspaper headlines (pg. 45).

The report ends with a section that outlines recommendations for how the sector can improve racial equity and racial justice funding and data and sorts the call-to-action steps into roles for grantmakers, philanthropy-supporting organizations (PSOs), and research institutions, who each have a role in improving the accuracy of data. One of their key recommendations is that the field needs to agree on how to define “racial equity” and “racial justice” and apply those definitions in a more standard way to categorize grant awards and reporting data.

This distinction between “racial equity” and “racial justice” is critical and the PRE report provides definitions for both. Racial equity “focuses on the prevention of harm and the redistribution of benefits within existing systems” whereas racial justice “focuses on power building and transformative goals, explicitly seeking to generate enough power among disenfranchised people to change the fundamental rules of society” (Cyril et al., 2021, pg. 27-28). The report also cautions against philanthropy coopting these terms from movement leaders and using them to further their own causes instead of being responsive to the actual call-to-action from the movement.

***Critique 3: Foundations lack real community accountability.***

Among the different types of foundations, community foundations are perhaps the most contradictory. These foundations exist to help direct funding to their local community and are geography specific. With their local knowledge of issues impacting the community, they are among the best positioned to be responsive to the communities they serve. However, the vast

majority of community foundations' funds are held in donor-advised funds (DAFs). These are particularly challenging to navigate both internally and externally because of donor interests and restrictions. Unless a donor is particularly interested in contributing to a complex social issue like solving racial inequality, it's up to donor advisors to either steer them in that direction, try to educate them about the range of community-defined priority areas, or simply stick to a narrowly defined set of interests, like funding their alma mater or the symphony. Among the leaders that I interviewed, many had strong opinions that community foundations should dismantle DAFs. Se-ah-dom Edmo, a Native woman who serves as a CEO of Seeding Justice, a social justice foundation in Oregon, argued that DAFs are "problematic and a barrier to creating more equitable systems of grantmaking".

Michelle Kauhane, a Native Hawaiian woman who serves as the Senior Vice President for Community Grants and Initiatives at the Hawaii Community Fund, explained how when she began working for a community foundation even she was shocked by the internal complexity of how they manage donor advised funds (DAFs):

Only till I got inside that I realized, oh my gosh, there's 1200 funds with 1200 different purposes. And it's as much of an art as it is a science to connect the right donor with the right nonprofit. And we try to group similar funds together and then create a grant program, because we're trying to respond to the donors' intent. These donors are gone. I mean, it's really a struggle. But I don't think people really understand the intricacy of a community foundation. At the same time, community foundations have a significant role to play as a convener as an influential power structure as having good relationships with government because we respond well – like in COVID and disastrous times, right? They're a fundraiser and responsive and so there's a lot of credibility within community foundations. And we... and we're starting to exercise our muscles because we know we have power. We know we have influence. We understand community. We have relationships with high-net-worth donors. What are we supposed to do with all that? Not be conservative; we're supposed to be better advocates.

Michelle also had a lot to say about how the power embedded in traditional models of philanthropy creates limitations to how responsive a foundation can be to the community's needs:

Power shows up everywhere in the field, right? The field itself is a power structure. Who drives philanthropy? The wealthiest people in your communities in the country, right? Those are the givers. Those are the donors. What I love about community foundations is that it's not just one source of money. So, we have really large donors, the Mark and Priscilla Zuckerberg [of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative] and others like Auntie Jane down the street who gives \$100 to a fund. That's the glory of a community foundation: re-thinking and re-imagining what philanthropy can be. It's not just one source of money, but we definitely have big time donors. But philanthropy is in and of itself a power structure. And, therefore, it shows up everywhere. It shows up on who sits on the boards, it shows up on who makes a decision.

However, Michelle also shared how, in her role as a Senior Vice President, she is trying to change those power dynamics within her foundation. She explains:

So, we're 106 years old, we're an institution that is embedded in these old models of traditional philanthropy where a donor tells you what to do, and you do it. To us trying to convert to [a model of] 'here's what the data tells us and what community tells us [about] where need is.' How do we dismantle and flip that power structure so that the giving is community-driven versus donor-driven? But power is everywhere, right? Donors are deciding where the money goes, and they have donor-advised funds.

Instead, she argues that community foundations need to persuade donors to "give us unrestricted dollars. And we would like to put the money where it's [needed], where there are underserved communities, where there are gaps and inequities in data and outcomes. So that we can't tell by race or geography or socioeconomic status who's going to die. How do we how do we start investing there? So, we're trying to change that power structure." Michelle is also critical about the amount of power that donors continue to leverage over "gifts" even after

they've received the tax benefit. She feels strongly that after a gift has been given, donors shouldn't continue to hold restrictions on how it can be used.

Other professionals in the field may take a different view of DAFs depending on the type of donor that they are working with. Noel Pacarro Brown, who serves as a financial advisor and Senior Vice President of Morgan Stanley's Conscious Wealth Management division, sees this as an incredible opportunity to educate and influence individual donors with significant wealth:

Now that I see it for what it is... how wealth can be an addiction. Wealth can be very toxic. It's not that I didn't know that, but now I see it. And then I see the whole arc of history. What do I want to do with that knowledge? And who do I want to be in relationship with? ...I also feel like a shift in consciousness, where the world is also ready to examine and acknowledge that wealth and capitalism - like oil and carbon - is affecting the health of the people and the planet... And that's where I see the opportunity to convert and partner with them on thinking around, 'What does it look like to have that economic stability... but then maximize your investment in the people and the place that afforded [it to] you? And by the way, let's pull the thread to see: Does it just begin with your life? Or where are their ancestors and lineage that you had that propelled you to this position that afforded you this wealth?'

She also shared with me an example of how she works with some of her clients to both help them see philanthropic giving in ways that they liken to socially responsible investing or venture capital for nonprofits:

I will just give you a case example with my client. He and I are going through a philanthropic mapping right now. And he has his assets at Marin Community Foundation, similar to a DAF scenario. So there's a philanthropic advisor there, too. So between her and myself, and then his project manager who's working on the DAF project... All four of us are going to get together and talk about where he is going to make investments - in terms of where he's going to channel capital, over the next five years. And where Jamie (at the Marin Community Foundation) can speak very specifically to: What is your mission? What is your cause? I've seen her rubric and it's very philanthropic advisory, kind of specific. And where Rebecca is coming at it from the project itself and focusing on Native-led, activist-led, and community-led funds. Channeling capital to meet [the need] and start the process of establishing relationships with these funds in order to bring them into the larger fold. And potentially have other donor-advised fund holders

see the benefit of this work. So, we're trying to create, basically create, like, a model for this work. [We are] looking across all the capital stacks and [helping our donor] see this incredible opportunity of giving that's your philanthropic capital... I have this map that shows in the middle of it, it's aligning your wealth, catalyzing your wealth, and innovating across the impact spectrum.

While Noel's work is very innovative and is creating new ways for donors to think about how to use their wealth, it still leaves the system of giving dependent on a "few good actors" to leverage their power in just ways rather than challenging and transforming the philanthropy sector to be more accountable to community.

This lack of accountability to community is especially detrimental to Black and Indigenous communities, who sacrificed their freedom, labor, and resources so that white settlers could build their wealth. Within the interviews, multiple leaders stressed the need for a truth & reconciliation process within philanthropy so we can trace where the wealth was extracted from. There are some foundations already taking up this challenge. Under the leadership of a different CEO, Kevin Walker, the Northwest Area Foundation has been influential to other foundations by sharing the origin story of their endowment wealth. In a recent blog written by NWAFF program officers (Racho, Fetzer & Foster, 2023), they reconcile with their foundation's history of racial capitalism and the impact it had on the people of color within region that they serve:

As part of the Foundation's commitment to advancing economic justice through its grantmaking, we've been examining our organization's history... A central element is the connection between the Foundation and the construction of a railroad in the late 19th century linking the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul to the emerging West Coast cities of Seattle and Portland, crossing the Northwest area. The railroad had far-reaching impact for many people and in different ways. James J. Hill, who built the fortune that eventually seeded the Northwest Area Foundation's endowment, actively lobbied federal officials to pass laws in the 1880s that broke up tribal land. This legislation opened up settlement by non-Native people and transportation for timber and mining

industries and for farming and ranching. Many white settlers gained profits, land, and opportunity. The extraction of natural resources by these industries harmed the environment and generations of Native communities. There was also significant impact on low-income Asians and other immigrants who helped build the railroad through extremely difficult and dangerous conditions. We recognize that our Foundation has work to do to address this history. The Foundation's commitment to prioritize 40% of grantmaking dollars to Native communities is a step in the right direction, as is the level of its combined giving to Native- and community of color-led groups, which stands above 80%. And there is more to be done.

A program officer from a community foundation in Hawaii also shared her experience in learning about the roots of the wealth that her foundation holds:

[Our foundation] is by definition and history an institutional foundation as our roots are deeply tied to the key landowners and businesses that were operating during the overthrow of Hawai'i's monarchy. Our oldest funds are tied to the storied history of power and privilege of this land and that history lends itself to the way the Foundation is perceived by the community at-large. Hawai'i's indigenous community knows the genealogy of land, money, and power and how that has impacted access to resources and capacity building over time, and our association with that is not always welcome news. With that being said, we have the potential to build better bridges to communities who haven't had the opportunity or interest in the past to engage, including our indigenous community. The future holds a lot of potential as we see a new era of philanthropy that faces these histories head on and offers equity lenses, trust-based solutions, and culturally aligned practices. I'm hopeful that talking about the history of wealth and land ownership will lend to a sense of kuleana or responsibility by those who have the resources and passion to impact Hawai'i and its oldest communities.

Finally, I want to close this section and the argument that philanthropy is not accountable enough to community, by contrasting it with one of my most significant findings: every single Indigenous person that I interviewed said that they felt accountable to community. In the context of my previous chapter on Native giving, this is not a surprise. However, it underscores the tensions and, at times, incommensurability between the philanthropy sector and Native belief systems.

***Critique 4: Foundations are complicit in wealth hoarding by only using the 5% in annual payouts for grantmaking rather than tapping into the 95% held in endowment wealth. This is especially egregious in these catastrophic times when those resources could make a profound difference.***

Many of the leaders I interviewed felt very passionate that foundations should stop thinking about existing in perpetuity and should focus on spending down quickly to help combat the dire and critically urgent issues we are currently facing. For those unfamiliar with how large institutional – sometimes called legacy – foundations work on the business end, most of their assets are held in endowments. As of 2017, the publication, *Philanthropy Daily*, estimated that \$1.7 trillion dollars are held in foundation endowments with \$1 trillion in private foundations and \$700 billion in other nonprofits and donor-advised funds (Hartmann, 2020). Although this data is not as current as I would like it to be, they estimate that that collective \$1 trillion dollars is held by approximately 87,000 foundations. Five foundations alone account for \$98 billion dollars of that wealth: 1) the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; 2) the Ford Foundation; 3) the Lilly Endowment; 4) the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; 5) the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

While these foundations sit on wealth that is comparable to that of entire nations, their operating and grantmaking budgets are mostly limited to the IRS-required annual charitable payout rate of their investments, which varies but averages 5% of the asset value of their endowments<sup>42</sup>. This is how they determine how much their annual grantmaking budgets can

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<sup>42</sup> More information about the 5% payout rule can be found at: <https://www.ncfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/The-Five-Percent-Minimum-Payout-Requirement-COF-2000-the-five-percent-minimum-payout-requirement.pdf>

be. Some foundations may choose to intentionally exceed this amount and payout larger amounts in the range of 7-10%, but those tend to be more fiscally and socially progressive foundations. Foundations that give out substantially more are considered part of a “spend down” model and are intentional about not existing in perpetuity.

This model of grantmaking has been particularly vexing to more progressive members of the sector because it has been conveniently misconstrued to serve as a guideline for annual giving when it is simply the minimum that the IRS has required since 1969. One of the Native women who I interviewed worked as a program officer at a largest private health foundation in California, with total assets of \$4.7 billion in 2021. While the endowment certainly was able to spread its grants around the state, including to rural and Tribal communities, she still argued that “foundations are operating in a scarcity mindset when it comes to annual grantmaking budgets while sitting on endowments worth billions of dollars”. She shared more about how the foundation was able to leverage a social bond to give out more funding during the COVID-19 pandemic:

It's crazy that we have \$4.5 billion in the bank, and we spend 5% of it, and we get freaked out about how you know, we're at our budget. And, you know, I want to give \$500,000 more in three different ways. And that we feel like we're operating under a scarcity mindset when we have \$4.5 billion dollars in the market. And so, I would just change how both the payout rates, and also the ability to pull other levers. So, for instance, this year given the moment that we're in, our board decided to take out a \$300 million social bond. It was funded immediately, and we got to give out an extra \$300 million this year on top of our regular grant making. It was a brilliant move to be able to, to show up in this moment, and more foundations have more levers to pull like that.

Ford Foundation also did a one-time social bond to release more funds during the pandemic, but when asked, their Executive Vice President of Programs, Hillary Pennington,

confirmed that they will not be making a longer-term commitment to this<sup>43</sup>. In a Ford Foundation blog post that she wrote in June 2022, Hillary described the process that the foundation went through to consider making its first social bond, and how it inspired other foundations to consider joining them in this strategy. She writes, “the flexibility of the social bond allowed us not only to double our grantmaking – expanding from \$550 million per year to over \$1 billion – but to support POC-and women-led organizations in a new, transformative way. And significantly, the bond allowed us to act quickly – as each day seemed to bring a new tragedy”. The Ford Foundation was also joined in its efforts to use the tool of issuing social bonds to expand giving by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, the Bush Foundation, and the California Endowment (Beaty, 2022). While this innovative strategy did result in more grants and funding flowing to the communities most impacted during the pandemic, it was not without some valid criticism. Social bonds are an investment tool that funds solutions to social problems through impact investing and performance-based contracts<sup>44</sup>. In this case, the Ford Foundation took on long-term debt by selling social bonds to investors so that they could raise money towards increasing their grantmaking budgets. This also allowed them to “take advantage of favorable market conditions, instead of dipping into their endowments” (Beaty, 2022).

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<sup>43</sup> Confirmed via personal communication in April 2023.

<sup>44</sup> A better description of social bonds can be found on the Social Finance website: <https://socialfinance.org/social-impact-bonds/#:~:text=Social%20Impact%20Bonds%20are%20unique,of%20high%2Dquality%20service%20providers.>

I want to acknowledge that foundations' decision to issue social bonds is not inherently a negative thing as it did offset some of the uncertainties and financial hardships that the nonprofit sector was experiencing during the height of the pandemic. But we also need to begin to reconcile with the truth that philanthropy's investments are part of what built up our current structures of inequality. Native foundation leaders with in-depth knowledge of their own foundations' investments are aware of the need for all foundations to divest from extractive industries and seek a bolder commitment from foundations to engage with environmental, social, and corporate governance investing (ESGs) and other socially responsible investing portfolios.

While I would argue that all foundations should consider dissolving their endowments, there are some foundations that are tied legally to their founder's intentions and other legal documents. A CEO who asked to remain anonymous shared how he sympathizes with the rationale and plea for foundations to spend down their endowments, but ultimately feels a sense of accountability to uphold the deed of trust.

Our board and I have accountability to our founder, and to our understanding of donor intent. Our founder wrote a very general deed of trust when he set up the foundation. He wasn't very prescriptive about the intent, it's pretty general. My way of working with that flexibility is to try to do the best we can with these resources, but not spend them all down to zero, because he definitely wrote in his deed of trust that the foundation was supposed to be perpetual. There's a lot of energy in the field now about spending down. And I can get behind that personally. If I worked for a spend down foundation, I would embrace that opportunity. But I actually work for an institution where the founder wanted it to last, not to come and go. So, I do feel that accountability as part of our broader accountability to the mission and to community. This is a delicate part of the job. There are plenty of folks around us, and probably within my organization too, whose view is, wherever there's a great fortune, there's a crime. Like that is stolen wealth flat out, and that the whole enterprise of capitalism is immoral, an analysis that's very palpable for folks these days. But I do still feel an accountability to treat the family that founded our organization with some

degree of honor. They not only generated the wealth, but they set up this foundation with which we're doing what I think is important work. So, I try to hold that tension.

Again, while I understand that a foundation CEO has a responsibility to their foundation—every single Indigenous person in this study felt accountable to their community.

***Critique 5: Philanthropy has a responsibility to end the willful ignorance in and among foundations about Indigenous peoples and the issues we care about.***

This particular criticism goes hand-in-hand with the need for philanthropy to commit to implementing DEI principles in not just its grantmaking but in its internal practices and changing its organizational culture. As a result of the incredibly low number of Native American professionals in the philanthropy sector—I interviewed the majority of them for this study—most foundations don't have Native staff or Native trustees on their boards. We need support in developing leadership pathways for Native professionals, especially ones that lead to board of trustees' seats. In 2022, Native Americans in Philanthropy issued the *Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals* report using 2020 data collected by CHANGE Philanthropy in their Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals report. NAP's report reveals that:

**3.8 percent** of people working in philanthropy identify either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with some other race or ethnicity. Of those respondents, **0.8 percent** identified solely as Indigenous. In comparison to the 2018 DAPP, the Report found that **1.6 percent** of people working in philanthropy identified solely as Indigenous. One reason the authors attribute to this percentage decline of Indigenous respondents in the 2020 DAPP is the significant increase of large foundations that participated in the survey.

By significantly increasing the number of Native and Indigenous professionals in philanthropy, it will challenge the narrative that foundations have of Native people. I interviewed one of the first Native women to work for a large institutional foundation in the

Midwest about her experiences over the past 25 years. At the time that she joined the foundation, she was the only Native person and remained the only one for most of her career. Not only was that an isolating experience, but she shared that “one of the greatest challenges is that expectation that you know everything about every Native issue, and that you have all these connections there where you can get information immediately. And it was difficult to always be in that position”. But another challenge was that she encountered a lot of systemic inequality and both covert and overt racism within the foundation’s leadership assumptions:

I always felt there was a lot of systemic inequality. A lot of it was covert, rather than overt. Like, just in terms of hiring, I would give [Human Resources] the names and bios of the most stellar Native scholars, activists, and movers and shakers, yet none of them would ever receive interviews for open positions. Then when outside expertise was needed, I started inviting some to be consultants. And even after seeing their talent and expertise [the foundation] would never bring them on staff. I would ask the appropriate staff: Why aren't you accepting more applications? And they would say, ‘Well, we go through a formal search [firm]. It made me realize that we need to start a Native search organization because even then, not many search firms have knowledge of Native candidates that they can refer - or that they know have the requisite talent and expertise. And so, you know, I thought that there was a lot of inequity in hiring practices which in turn impacted the decision-making processes about who receives funding. I realized that when I worked for the Vice President that even for the proposals that were excellent and had creative ideas and fit all the checkboxes that we had in terms of taking them forward to request approval... It was the top-tier of administration that would make the final decisions, and approval was often based on who they personally knew, who they trusted would get the job done, or who had a years-long track record of successfully administering programs... And then, as far as their vision of Native communities and organizations, it most often seemed to focus on deficits and stereotypes and as a result, lack of trust. In earlier years, I sometimes felt that funding was approved more so because of charity, that the funder was sympathetic to the ‘plight of the Poor Indian’. You know, they're sick, they're so poor, and they're so uneducated, and with poor health and all that so [the Foundation] needs to help. Then there was also the issue of trust with questions such as, ‘Are they going to be able to handle the money? Do they really think that their plan will work in that community? What do they mean by a culturally-relevant approach?’ So that was kind of the attitude in the early years. I feel like I was able to help educate and change some of that, but I think much of it is still prevalent in philanthropy.

In addition to hiring more Native staff and recruiting more Native board members who can share their knowledge and lived experiences, my study participants also argued that “foundations need to work on their own internal capacity and collective engagement in root cause analysis for Native issues. Do they understand the history of the creation of our nation, the legacy of genocide, the need to dismantle systems of white supremacy, and how these are at the root of so many of today’s current problems?” However, another participant, Carly Bad Heart Bull from Native Ways Federation, shared that “this is not simply a call for the philanthropy sector to educate itself and become more knowledgeable about Native Americans. This is also a call-to-action to couple that with a strong commitment to funding Native-led organizations”.

## **Conclusion**

Across all the interviews I conducted with Native leaders, BIPOC allies, and white allies, I heard a lot of frustration about the current state of the sector. People are unified in their desire for real and significant change. In the short-term, we need new paradigms in philanthropy. In the long-term, let’s envision a future “where philanthropy doesn’t exist” as it does now because we have more income equality. We need the philanthropy sector to move more money towards movement building, justice, and liberation without engaging in “movement capture” (Ming Francis, 2019) or the undermining of racial-justice movements (Kohl-Arenas & Ming Francis, 2020; Gunther, 2020). Scholar Megan Ming Francis has argued extensively in her political science work that since the beginning of the Civil Rights Era, foundations have been guilty of co-opting social movements without understanding and adopting differing ideologies. (Francis, 2019). We need foundations to follow the lead of movements instead of taking

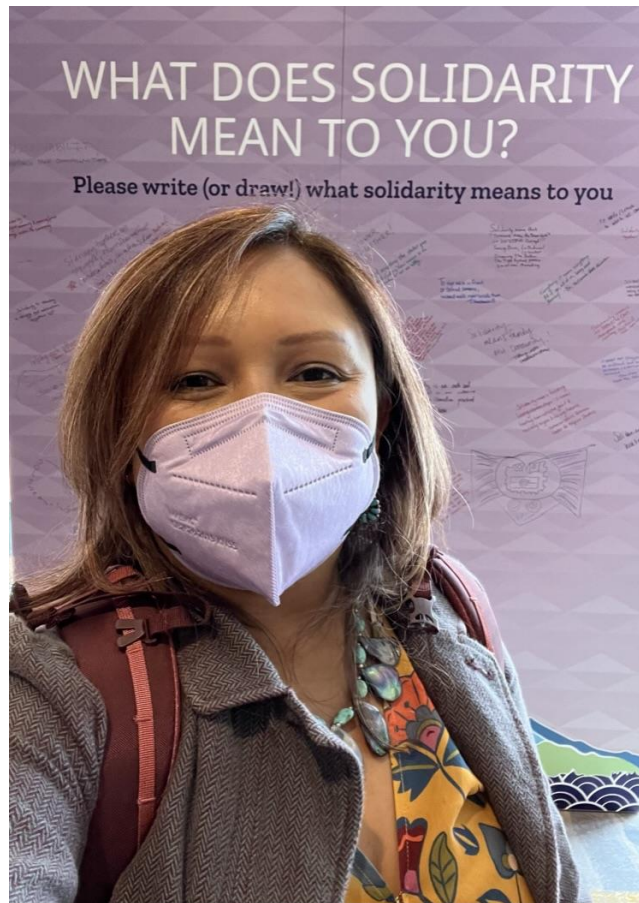
leadership. In the next chapter I will explore some possibilities for solidarity within the philanthropic sector and highlight partnerships between Native and Indigenous leaders, other BIPOC leaders, and white allies.

## Chapter 6: Possibilities for Solidarity

**Figure 11**

*Researcher at Native Americans in Philanthropy and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy's co-hosted Power in Solidarity conference in June 2022*

Note. Image credit: Dana Arviso



Melanated folk and active allies...

Remember that feeling in June 2020, when it seemed like just maybe the currently called U.S. and even across Turtle Island actually seemed to be having a racial reckoning? Remember when all those companies were scrambling to hire Black and Brown people in positions of leadership and instituting DEI measures? Remember when it was 'cool' to discuss racism, privilege, misogyny, equity, homophobia, class and white supremacy culture in the open and we could show up as our whole selves for a while?

Just reminding us that happened. -- Tracy Rector (Human Rights Advocate, Environmental Activist, and Social Justice Filmmaker), 2024

Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment (hooks, 1984, pg. 67).

I open this chapter with a quote from one of my participants, Tracy Rector, who recently reflected with bittersweet nostalgia on the feelings of promise during the early days of the racial reckoning movement. 2020 was also the year when I began working on this dissertation and what has unfolded since then has been a mixture of progress, disappointment, backlash, and hope. I also wanted to juxtapose Tracy's feeling that progress was only fleeting, with what bell hooks has been telling us since 1984, that: "solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment". In this moment in time, my colleagues in philanthropy are sharing with me deep concerns about where we go from here. How do we continue to sustain our commitment to decolonization and the racial justice movement?

This chapter is dedicated to sharing potential solutions to many of the critiques I offered in chapter 5. It's an opportunity for us to reimagine what might be possible for philanthropy, and to see how standing together in solidarity might be our best path forward toward collective justice and freedom. I begin this chapter with a series of vignettes that feel like postcards from my travels, in and out of the field over the past year, as I stepped back into working in philanthropy again. The second half of this chapter begins to define what solidarity, allyship, co-conspiratorship can look like at both the individual and institutional levels of philanthropy. The final section of this chapter offers excerpts from participant interviews where I asked Native collaborators to imagine a future in which our Native nations could further decolonize and were

properly resourced. I hope that as the reader you are challenged, politicized, and inspired by the stories in this chapter.

### **Postcards from the Field: Vignettes of Possibility**

#### ***Stronger Together: Weathering the Current Conservative Backlash to Funding BIPOC-Led***

#### ***Organizations by Standing Together in Solidarity***

In June 2023, I participated as a panelist for the closing plenary of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP)'s annual meeting held in San Francisco. Ornate chandeliers hung overhead in the ballroom of the Palace Hotel, yet on my walk to the hotel, I had noticed the marked increase in San Francisco's homeless community, along with increased police presence and surveillance, and signs of humanity's struggle with the fentanyl drug epidemic along Market Street. It was hard not to notice; this crisis has impacted many West Coast cities, including my home city of Seattle. In moments like this, I find myself reflecting on the stark difference between what's happening on the streets versus what's happening in hotel ballrooms. These worlds can feel quite disjointed, but conference organizers can – and do – invite speakers who reflect the lived realities of what struggling communities are experiencing. In this case, it's critical that we make sure to center those who are most impacted by affordable housing solutions, proposed policies to help treat drug addiction, and provide access to social services and mental health support.

On this particular day, I was on a panel with Marcela Muniz from the Latino Community Foundation, Marc Philpart from the California Black Freedom Fund, and Eddy Zheng from the New Breath Foundation. We had a deep conversation about how we were engaging in cross-racial solidarity and building collective power in philanthropy. From each of our vantage points,

representing different BIPOC-led funds, we shared how we have been navigating the years since the promise of 2020's Black Lives Matter movement, when we dared to hope for increased investment and perhaps even witness a transformational moment where philanthropy might actually reckon with its roots in racial capitalism. From my perspective, I shared the following:

In months that followed George Floyd's murder and a renewed fight for racial justice, we witnessed corporations and foundations respond along a continuum of action: from statements of solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement to pledging deeper commitments to tackle racial inequities and systemic inequality within philanthropy. I think many of us were moved by this moment and experienced a collective moment of hope. However, I've been privy of a number of conversations in the field where folks are beginning to question whether these commitments will be honored past the initial pledges, or if we'll see a spike in one-time giving over a 5-year period before the trends dip back into dismal single-digits again. I sense a collective fear that we might somehow 'squander' this opportunity by not leveraging these funds towards greater change, or by not holding the sector accountable to seeing out a vision of true racial equity. And while all of those fears are based in elements of truth, I want us to pay attention to the bigger picture: we need to get outside of the dynamics of **scarcity** that make us feel like we are all jockeying to get a sliver of the grantmaking budget and into a space where we are demanding collective **abundance** for all of us.

My emphasis in these remarks was that BIPOC organizations should not be in competition with one another because we are all working toward the same goal of collective freedom, economic justice, and for all of us to experience abundance.

California Black Freedom Fund Executive Director Marc Philpart, who is also a friend from our graduate school organizing days, shared: "What philanthropy doesn't understand about multi-racial solidarity is that it can't work unless you invest in people's capacity to be at the table. Opening up the table is not enough, [you have to] support others to be there [for it to be] meaningful." Without building cross-racial solidarity, BIPOC "communities can be used as

[a] wedge” politically as we saw in the Supreme Court case<sup>45</sup> where the “model minority myth” was used to gather support from Asian American communities to argue against affirmative action. When asked specifically what role Asian and Pacific Islander colleagues can play in cross-racial solidarity, I shared this advice: “Advocacy, allyship, and accountability. 1) Advocacy within the spaces where you are at the table and there might not be a Native person present; 2) Allyship, which is built on the concept of relationality or “being in good relations” with Native people; 3) Accountability for the sector as we seek to collectively transform it and center racial justice for all of our communities.” Foundations need to provide support for grant partners and BIPOC-led intermediary funders to come together to strengthen relationships and strategize how to work together on common issue areas.

The racial justice movement of 2020 that was sparked by the Black Lives Matter protests felt like a watershed moment for many of us. It seemed as though foundations, corporations, and individual donors finally had a breakthrough in their political and social consciousness and were ready to put money behind their words and sentiments. Daniels, Gunther, and Motoyama (2023) captured the momentum of this time:

Across the United States, foundations and nonprofits took action to confront the problem of racism as never before. Vast sums of money – no one knows how much – flowed to nonprofits that advance racial equity by seeking to make education more accessible, hold police accountable, help people of color build wealth, reduce mass incarceration, improve health equity, and more.

As invigorating as that time was, the authors reflected that, in 2023, “It’s too soon, though, to say how deep the changes have been, whether they will last, or, most important, whether they

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<sup>45</sup> In reference to: STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS, INC. v. PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE [No. 20–1199]. Argued October 31, 2022—Decided June 29, 2023. [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199\\_hgdj.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/20-1199_hgdj.pdf)

have made a material difference to Black Americans”. What is clear is that three years of increased funding cannot make up for hundreds of years of structural racism and systemic underfunding of Black communities—or Native communities.

By the fall 2023, BIPOC philanthropic professionals were increasingly and vocally worried about what they were seeing: a blow-back to advances made in funding to communities of color since 2020 due to attacks from far-right MAGA conservatives. Conversations have now shifted to, what can we do and how can we organize against this? As a result, many progressive funders are using movement and organizing tactics such as engaging in donor and funder organizing, which means they are educating and politicizing foundation staff while also giving them practical advice and strategy for how to navigate power and influence decision-makers on the inside. Others are working in solidarity with one another to ensure that funders don’t increase funding to some BIPOC communities at the cost of cutting funding to others.

As reference in chapter 5’s critique that foundations are not making a strong enough commitment to implement DEI principles, and move needed resources to BIPOC communities, foundations have recently backpedaled on their existing commitments out of fear and anxiety following the 2023 Supreme Court decision on affirmative action. Since foundations are already risk averse and wary of contending with legal battles, some are proactively altering language, adopting race neutral approaches, over-scrutinizing grantees’ advocacy efforts, adding new layers of legal review, and weaponizing antisemitism (Villarosa, Maulbeck & Perera, 2024). This is not just anecdotal or incidental but is increasingly being widely tracked across the sector. A February 2024 opinion piece by leaders within the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE)

documented the growing concern that progressive philanthropy is under attack by political conservatives, who seek to instill fear within foundations that they will be targeted by lawsuits:

Through workshops and direct conversations with more than 100 organizers and foundation staff, our organization, the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, has seen a regression in recent months from core racial-justice values at the very moment deeper investments are needed to battle the radical right and its efforts to undermine progress. This backsliding must be halted before it does long-term damage (Villarosa, Maulbeck & Perera, 2024).

In response to this backsliding, the Decolonizing Wealth Project held a webinar, also in February 2024, to address the need for philanthropy to “double down” on its racial equity and justice efforts now instead of backing away. Panelists shared legal strategies for how foundations could continue to fulfill their commitments in the face of challenges to prioritizing race-based funding. They also shared that some leaders were organizing collective strategies for foundations to employ to guard themselves against potential lawsuits. Their overarching message is that the field of philanthropy should prepare itself for this fight, but with the knowledge that it has a solid case for protecting funding to support DEI, racial equity, and racial justice work. A recent statement by Native Americans in Philanthropy addresses this:

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s ruling against affirmative action, conservative extremists have embarked on a campaign that characterizes anything directly supporting people of color as anti-White and potentially illegal. Now operating under the guise of ‘risk management’, grant-makers and philanthropic organizations are increasingly regressing in their racial justice programs... Investing in racial equity is not divisive, discriminatory, or illegal. Now more than ever, we must double down on racial justice (2024).

While the backsliding and backpedaling on commitments to funding BIPOC-led organizations is alarming and disappointing, the arc of the history of social movements reveals that these patterns are often cyclical.

## ***Decolonizing Wealth Project Launches Reparative Funding Models and Inspires Foundations to Fund the Reparations Movement***

In November 2023, I traveled from Oakland to New York City to help celebrate the first five years of the Decolonizing Wealth Project. It was a beautiful evening filled with inspiring words from my friend Edgar, along with cultural performances from Lumbee artists, and a rare chance for me to reconnect with other progressive funders on the East Coast. But more than anything, it was an occasion to mark the how far the organization has come—from a spark of an idea to a movement that recognizes how money can be used as medicine, to, finally, the creation of a foundation to redistribute the necessary resources needed for healing Black and Native communities.

Along with helping to organize and educate other funders, the Decolonizing Wealth Project (DWP) has been instrumental in advancing reparative funding models for Black and Native people. Their CEO, Edgar Villanueva, is the author of the seminal book, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, which outlines how philanthropy operates in a dysfunctional oppressive way and provides seven steps for healing. It also offers the possibility that, used the right way, money can be medicine. A central premise that Edgar makes in his book is that “in order to embrace a new paradigm of connect, relate, belong, instead of divide, control, exploit, we first have to heal” (Villanueva, 2018, pg. 109). He outlines the seven steps towards healing from the harms of philanthropy’s colonial history: 1) grieve; 2) apologize; 3) listen; 4) relate; 5) represent; 6) invest; 7) repair. In this work, investment in Native and Black communities is a precursor to repair.

After the book was published, in 2018, Edgar embarked on a speakers tour within philanthropy for several years before deciding to establish the Decolonizing Wealth Project (DWP) and its sister fund Liberated Capital, which operates under the giving circle model and serves as a philanthropic advising firm. DWP's work is evenly split between advancing the reparations movement for Black communities, with projects like #Case4Reparations Fund and the Food & Land Justice Fund as well as moving funding to Native communities through the Indigenous Earth Fund, Native American COVID Relief Fund, California Truth and Healing Fund, and the Indigenous Circle of Giving Fund. Since 2019, DWP and Liberated Capital have redistributed over \$15 million dollars by serving as a regranting intermediary for other foundations and engaging over 300 donors and community leaders in their giving circles, healing summits, and programs (Decolonizing Wealth Project, 2024).

In 2023, Decolonizing Wealth Project held a national conference in Atlanta, called "Alight Align Arise: Advancing the Movement for Repair", to bring together scholars, movement leaders, funders, and policymakers to align the collective strategy around advancing the case for reparations. Speakers included scholars Ta-Nehisi Coates, Nikole Hannah-Jones and U.S. Representative Jamaal Bowman, who proposed the "Reparations Now Resolution", along with author of the resolution, Representative Cori Bush. Attendees were also inspired by the traction that the reparations movement is gaining in cities like Evanston, Illinois; San Francisco; Detroit; St. Paul; Boston; St. Louis; and Asheville, North Carolina, and in states like California, New Jersey, and New York by forming task forces that document the harms caused by slavery, the racial wealth gap, and policies like red-lining, which systematically prevented Black communities from accessing housing (Noel, 2022). In June 2023, the AB 3121 Reparations Task

Force released the California Reparations Report to the California state legislature and public, and has been sharing their process, recommendations, and learning as a model for other states. It is clear even if momentum seems to be stagnating at the federal level, it is building at the local and state levels.

Decolonizing Wealth Project seeks to amplify this momentum, announcing at the close of the conference that it will provide \$4 million dollars in funding over the next two years through its Case for Reparations fund to directly support the growing ecosystem of movement leaders and organizations dedicated to this work. Over the next five years, it plans to fundraise and invest an additional \$20 million more. In sharing his reflections on the inaugural gathering, Villanueva (2023) wrote: “A theme throughout Alight, Align, Arise was that the movement for reparations is a struggle to imagine and bring forth new narratives about free, abundant, and liberated Black communities across this country. Panelists put forth that our current unjust world was imagined by people, and thus, we also have the power to imagine a new one”. He also provided concrete recommendations for funders on how they can support the reparations movement, including: 1) using foundation resources to fund the reparations movement and adopt reparative giving frameworks; 2) introducing movement leaders and organizations to its networks; 3) offering more capacity building support; 4) recognizing and respecting the contributions of movement leaders; and 5) lending foundation support to statewide reparations task forces by endorsing the reports—especially in California, where enacting the recommendations will require public support.

While I did not attend DWP’s inaugural convening of the reparations ecosystem, I did have the opportunity to hear from scholars, movement leaders, and a member of the California

Reparations Task force at the CHANGE Unity Summit plenary in October 2023 in Los Angeles. The plenary on “Reparations Rising: Pathways to Just Healing and Equitable Transformation” was moderated by Susan Taylor Batten, president and CEO of the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE), and included the following speakers: Dr. Cheryl Grills, Professor of Psychology at Loyola Marymount University; Robin Rue Simmons, Founder & Executive Director of FirstRepair; Damario Solomon-Simmons, Executive Director of Justice for Greenwood Foundation; Donald Tamaki, Member of the California Reparations Task Force; and Aj Williams, Co-Director for People & Organizing at Durham Beyond Policing. One of my key takeaways was that while some people might think that reparations will only benefit Black communities, we all benefit from the truth and healing that reconciling with the immense harm caused during the course of our country’s history of slavery and its ongoing racism. The report is thoroughly researched, outlining twelve categories of harm and 100 recommendations for how to repair the harm, including but not limited to cash payments. One of the most promising recommendations is a guarantee of non-repetition, which means that the state of California will stop perpetuating harm and commit to systemically changing public policy that enacts harm against Black communities.

California Reparations Task Force member, Donald Tamaki, who is Japanese American, and the only non-Black member of the task force, also reminded us how essential it is that we form cross-racial and multi-racial alliances to support the adoption and implementation of the recommendations. He shared his perspective on how California has yet to reconcile with its racial history and treatment of African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican American, Asian Americans, including the internment of Japanese Americans in internment camps in World War

II and the exploitation of Chinese labor during the building of the railroad and the California Gold Rush. Referencing the history of his Japanese American community, he said:

[There is] no equivalent obviously between four years at a concentration camp and 400 years of racial oppression and exclusion, and subjugation. But there is a part where in the Japanese American redress for reparations movement, which is one of the few examples in modern history where the [United States] government apologized and put some money behind that in terms of financial atonement... There can be no racial equity without Black reparations. And we're all basically tied together.

Again, our liberation is tied to one another's liberation. None of us are free until we are all free.

### ***The Promise of Funder Organizing in Native Voices Rising's Funder Learning Fellowship***

In Spring 2023, I went on the job market after a five-year hiatus from working in philanthropy. As I considered how and when to re-enter the field, I also took time to explore different opportunities within the ecosystem and consider where my particular experiences, skill sets, and talents might be best suited. In an interesting turn-of-events, I secured a job with Native Voices Rising (NVR), a collaborative grantmaking project between Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy. As a Senior Program Strategist, my role is split between leading the funder organizing, influencing the philanthropic field, and fundraising to grow this fund so we can grow our annual grantmaking budget from \$3.5 million in 2023 to a goal of \$10 million dollars over the next decade.

A large part of my funder organizing work has been developing and launching the pilot of Native Voices Rising's Funder Learning Fellowship, which is an eight-month program designed to immerse foundation staff in learning about funding Native communities. While the program is still in its earliest months of implementation, it is a really interesting intervention, presenting an opportunity for non-Native funders to learn more about how to be in better

relationship with and better resource Native communities. We are explicitly learning about power-building and Native organizing, and how Native and Tribal communities are combatting the root causes of racism, political disenfranchisement, and threats to tribal sovereignty. The goals for this program are to: 1) to build more respectful, high-quality relationships with Native groups and communities; 2) foster a deeper understanding of Native communities and in particular, approaches to organizing and power-building; 3) develop more responsive, humble, and trusting grantmaking practices; and 4) ultimately move more money—from participants' own institutions and from their peers—to Native communities, especially to support Native organizing and power-building.

The Funder Learning Fellowship launched in January 2024 with an in-person gathering on Tribal lands coupled with a learning tour to better understand Seattle's urban Native community. We convened the cohort at the Suquamish Tribe's Clearwater resort on Tribal lands and took time to ground them in understanding the history and culture of the Tribe as well as how to be in good relations with one another. We also had presentations from NVR's grant partners and other Native-led organizations that we partner with: the Suquamish Foundation, Native Organizers Alliance, Chief Seattle Club, Potlatch Fund, and Na'ah Illahee Fund. We also attended a community event hosted by the Suquamish Foundation at the House of Awakened Culture to commemorate the 50-year anniversary of the Boldt Decision, which confirmed NW Tribes' treaty rights to fish.

One of the things that stands out to me as the co-facilitator of this pilot program is that our cohort is made up of Native Americans, other People of Color, and White people who are interested in learning how to be stronger allies. While initially conceived of and designed as a

cohort for white allies working in institutional philanthropy, it ended up being predominantly BIPOC with only two white women and one white man, which has led to me think through the pedagogical implications of these questions: What does it mean to build solidarity while also de-centering whiteness? What are the types of conversations we can have and goals we can aspire to when we aren't starting from the baseline premise that it's sufficient to enact DEI principles? While we haven't completed this pilot program, or had the opportunity to fully answer these questions, we are mindful about both meeting our fellowship participants where they are in their individual learning, and enacting allyship while challenging their thinking around how they can better resource Native communities. We are coaching them on how to navigate the unique dynamics of each of their institutional settings. Funder organizing can best be characterized as stewarding the political consciousness of funders and funding institutions toward collective action in ways that ultimately move resources to historically underserved and under-resourced communities.

Within Native Voices Rising's team, we felt it was essential to launch this pilot at this critical juncture, where we can see funding commitments beginning to dissipate and we need to continue building solidarity. My colleague Allistair Mallillin, who serves as the Director of Strategy and Asset Building at Common Counsel Foundation shared:

The challenge with such conversations about solidarity is that they are happening few and far between. It's still a very competitive environment in terms of the philanthropic actors who are politicized enough [to enact change]. From my perspective, I see that windows are starting to potentially close... especially as we're shifting back into a recession and folks will shift back into a scarcity mentality. I'm challenged by this because the best time to have those deep conversations is when there's abundance.

In closing this section of vignettes that shares both the inspiration and the challenges that exist for this type of liberatory work, we must remember that in the face of the challenges progressive philanthropy is currently experiencing, resistance and resurgence efforts still lean forward with momentum towards justice.

### **Deepening My Understanding of and Commitment to Indigenous Liberation Movements**

#### **Figure 12**

*My first trip to Alcatraz Island was for the Sunrise Ceremony to mark Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 9, 2023.*

Note. Image credit: Dana Arviso



During the course of writing this dissertation I moved from Seattle to Oakland, California, which is within the traditional homelands of the Ohlone people. I had only lived in Oakland for a little over a week when friends from Payahuunadü (my Paiute relatives' traditional homelands in eastern California) reached out to let me know they were planning to go to the Indigenous Peoples' Day Sunrise Ceremony on Alcatraz, which has been happening since 1975 and is coordinated by the International Indian Treaty Council. They also hold another commemorative event every November 20<sup>th</sup> to mark the day the Occupation started in 1969. For me, this was my first trip to Alcatraz Island despite spending time in the Bay Area over the decades. For those unfamiliar with the history of Alcatraz, Native American students and activists reclaimed the land from a former federal prison based on "treaty provisions that promised surplus or abandoned federal property to Indian tribes" (Smith & Warrior, 1996, pg. 10). It was one of the watershed moments in the American Indian resistance movement.

It was also, and continues to be, a space where non-Native allies came together to support the movement and offer their solidarity. In the early days of the occupation, the Oakland chapter of the Black Panthers provided security and other forms of support (Blansett, 2019). Black scholar Django Paris also shares examples of these acts of solidarity that were shared by Puyallup elder Ramona Bennet, who traveled to Alcatraz and the Bay Area to sell fish to markets during the Indian Fishing Wars in Washington state (2020, pg. 26). While the Alcatraz Occupation ended in June 1971, it inspired other takeovers of federal lands in Fort Lawton in Seattle, and a vacated space near Davis, California that became D-Q University. It also sparked other student-led protests at UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, and other college campuses that seeded the creation of ethnic studies departments. Richard Oakes, one of the

founders of the Alcatraz Occupation, has famously said, “Alcatraz was not an island, it was an idea” (Blansett, 2019). And that idea and call to action has lived on in ongoing struggles for Native liberation, like Standing Rock. It inspired me to show up at Očhéthi Šakówin Camp in 2016. For more storytelling on some of the beautiful solidarity work that happened within the Standing Rock protests, and what it means to be invited into these spaces as an ally, please see the work of Eagle Shield, Paris, Paris and San Pedro (2020) in *Education in Movement Spaces: Standing Rock to Chicago Freedom Square*.

As a young person, I was lucky enough to learn some of this inspiring history by studying with Native scholars including Dr. Steven Crum at University of California, Davis and Dr. Annette Reed Crum at Sacramento State University in the mid-1990s as an undergraduate student. It was in Dr. Reed Crum’s class that I first read about the history of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Occupation of Alcatraz in the book, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (Smith & Warrior, 1996). Of course, I had heard of Alcatraz as I was growing up. One of our family friends, Adam Nordwall, was one of the original activists and shared stories with us when he and his family stopped by our house decades later when they were on the pow wow trail. I was learning about these stories of Indigenous resistance just as my own political awakening as a teenager was developing, supporting the Western Shoshone people in their protests against the expansion of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste repository<sup>46</sup> in Nevada in the early 1990’s. Understanding this issue within the broader contexts of environmental justice and Tribal treaty rights helped me to see that Native

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<sup>46</sup> For more context on this issue, please see: KTNV. (September 4, 2023). The deep roots of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste fight—and why it continues to this day. KTNV Las Vegas. <https://www.ktnv.com/news/the-deep-roots-of-the-yucca-mountain-nuclear-waste-fight-and-why-it-continues-to-this-day>

people have always resisted the ongoing colonization and systematic oppression in the United States.

In the course of my PhD program, and in researching this dissertation topic, I have also made a personal commitment to learn more theory from Black scholars – specifically from writers within Black feminism and Black radical tradition. In summer 2019, I took a class with Drs. Sandy Grande and Leslie Williams on “Black and Indigenous Theories of Educational Liberation and Resurgence”, which deepened my understanding around critical theories of resurgence, liberation, decolonization, revolution, abolition, and fugitivity. I continue to draw words and inspiration from scholars I was exposed to in that space: Audra Simpson, Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Robin Kelley, Audre Lorde, The Red Nation, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Angela Davis. Up until this point in time, most of my political and social theory had been centered on Native and Indigenous studies. However, I began to see the critical connections between how Black and Native people are impacted by settler colonialism, racism, and white supremacy. I also began to see how we are beginning to imagine the possibilities of what liberated futures might look like and how we might prepare ourselves. I continue to draw inspiration from the Combahee River Collective, who issued their statement in 1977: “We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy” (Taylor, 2017, pg. 19).

While I don’t necessarily identify as a movement leader or an activist on the frontlines, I do appreciate and respect the roles that protest and resistance have played since 1492. In my own evolving understanding of my role in supporting movement work, I recognize that I am

someone who can leverage my power, privilege, and resources to help fund the liberation movement. I also strongly believe and advocate that those of us who have this kind of access, power, and unique positionality have a responsibility to exhibit advocacy, allyship, and accountability to social movements. However, in this section I will outline what I think are best practices and some community-defined definitions and expectations for what it means to serve as an ally or even co-conspirator. Similar to how Native philanthropy operates within a set of values that help us stay in good relations with one another, movement work is often nuanced work that relies heavily on those core principles of relationality, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and redistribution.

### **What does it Mean to Serve as an Ally or Co-Conspirator to Native and Black Communities?**

We begin with the premise that there have been longstanding forms of solidarities and coalitions between Native and Black communities throughout the history of the United States going back to the days of slavery and again during the Civil Rights Era. In Mays (2021) book, *An Afro-Indigenous History of the United States*, he argues that while these have been “hidden histories”, Black and Native people’s resistance to intertwined historical oppression has transformed this country and made possible more just futures . This dissertation project is rooted in the commitment to enact what my Lakota friend, fellow scholar and relative Alayna Eagle Shield, has framed as “Indigenous Peoples and Black Peoples seeing each other as relatives” (Eagle Shield et al., 2020, pg. 1). However, as noted by some of these scholars and relatives:

It is unfortunate that the vast majority of research, practice, art, and writing in the field of Black and Native intellectual thought and education do not take up these parallel projects [of co-resistance]. Indeed, our separate fields are laden with erasures of one another’s communities, of ongoing anti-Blackness in Native

scholarship and practice and of ongoing anti-Indigeneity in Black scholarship and practice (Eagle Shield, Paris, Paris & San Pedro, 2020, pg. 11).

The concept of “parallel projects of co-resistance” has been written about by Dr. Sandy Grande (2018, pg. 60) and refers to how we build intersections between our parallel struggles to achieve decolonization. She writes about how we might connect the #NoDAPL and #BlackLivesMatter movements by understanding that we are refusing the same root structures:

I want to suggest a parallel politics of dialectical co-resistance. When Black peoples can *still* be killed but not murdered; when Indians are *still* made to disappear; when (Indigenous) land and Black bodies are still destroyed and accumulated for settler profit; it is incumbent upon all those who claim a commitment to refusing the white supremacist, capitalist, settler state, to do the hard work of building “interconnected movements for decolonization” (Coulthard, 2014). The struggle is real. It is both material and psychological, both method and politics, and thus must necessarily straddle the both/and (as opposed to either/or) coordinates of revolutionary change. In terms of process, this means working simultaneously beyond *resistance* and through the enactment of *refusal*—as fugitive, abolitionist, and Indigenous, sovereign subjects.

Within these possibilities for solidarity, it feels important to state some definitions of the key terms “solidarity”, “allyship”, and what it means to be a “co-conspirator” in this chapter. I’ve found that even within movement spaces, there are differences in understandings that sometimes result in miscommunication, disappointment, and/or conflict. In simple terms, “solidarity” refers to the act of showing up—often by invitation or following an offer—to stand with another group of people who are facing oppression. In more complicated terms, it means “to reconcile tension and find togetherness through relationality, co-learning in movement spaces, genuine reciprocity through conversation and storying knowledge co-creation, and co-imagining anti-racist education” (Stewart & Thompson, 2023, pg. 4). Solidarity requires acting together with others, and inherently involves building a respectful and responsible relationship,

exchanging reciprocity toward the goal of upending existing power structures for collective justice. Black Lives Matter founder Alicia Garza reflected on solidarity by asking:

What brings us together even though we don't all live the same life? We share the same aspirations. We yearn for the same things. And so what does it mean for us to then to be in deep and principled relationship with each other? ... we don't just want a seat at the table. We want the table. And we want to decide who is sitting at the table (Garza as cited in Taylor, 2017, pg. 168).

Another beautiful definition of solidarity offered by Black scholar Robin Maynard and Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson who wrote about their experiences in “coming together to nourish each other, to relate to each other, to listen and share, and breathe together” (2022, pg. 32).

Practicing thoughtful allyship is a core part of enacting solidarity. Allyship “is an active and consistent practice of using power and privilege to achieve equity, inclusion, and justice while holding ourselves accountable to marginalized people’s needs” (Kim, 2019). Kim argues that allyship has four key components: 1) recognition that it is “an active practice that requires action”; 2) “requires an understanding and self-awareness around [one’s] power and privilege”; 3) has a collective goal of working toward equity, inclusion, and justice; 4) “allyship requires us to hold ourselves accountable to advancing marginalized people’s needs”. We can think of allyship as the conditions upon which each person who seeks to be in solidarity enters into the beginning stages of a relationship that they continue to maintain. Solidarity is not just about support, it’s also about being willing to follow and not always trying to lead.

Co-conspiratorship, meanwhile, is a deeper level of allyship. Indigenous Action Media (2014) published a critique of what they saw as allyship becoming dominated by competitive “ally champions” which risks reinforcing commodification and exploitation. Instead they offer a

distinction based on the definition of “accomplice” which refers to “a person who helps another commit a crime”. They reference this definition as being situated along a risk spectrum in which “direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We’re in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence”. This kind of solidarity might not be for everyone. For example, there were protestors at Standing Rock who were willing to get arrested for participating in direct action and there were others who stood as allies and offered different kinds of support back at Camp.

For the purpose of this dissertation study, I did not ask my non-Native research participants about how they may have acted as conspirators or accomplices to Native communities. Instead, I invited them to participate in this study based on my perception of each of them as an ally. I also asked them how they saw themselves as allies to Native causes and what solidarity between Native and Black communities could look like in the context of Land Back and reparations movements as separate but parallel projects. Here is a sampling of what some of the non-Native research participants shared from their own experiences as allies to Black and Native people, organizations, and communities:

I feel accountable to who I'm holding space for and who's in a room... I feel accountable to both real and imagined Black women in my life [within] philanthropy who have taught me, formed me, collaborated with me as former and current colleagues. I often think about how am I showing up vis-à-vis these women and [am I accountable] if I didn't earn trust of the Black women in my organizations? I think we try to be accountable by proxy to the voices of movement leaders and folks that are embedded in movement. But I don't have a lot of those connections on a day-to-day basis. It's more like: Are we echoing things actually being asked for? - Anonymous

I see myself as an ally [when I provide] support with my own gifts the work, the priorities, and the values of Indigenous communities... Allyship means following the lead of the community that I'm allied or in cahoots with. I think right now, for many of us who are trying to be responsible allies, is [figuring out] how do we

both follow the lead of folks in their communities but also not erase ourselves, our own values, and our own viewpoints. To have the sensitivity and the strong enough relationships to be able to be invited in ways that honor our ally, my gifts as an ally, and also their vision for their community? - Anonymous

I can't decide that I'm an ally. I feel like Native folks have to decide that for themselves. And I hope that they see it. My goal is to be a co-conspirator [and] to get just as messy. I'm really interested in listening. When we first started there was a few areas that we were really interested in: reparations, Land Back, gentrification, funding individuals, and funding businesses that run as community centers. And I think specifically in Land Back and in reparations, what was interesting to me is, we only talk about reparations for Black people, and we only talk about Land Back for Native folks. And I think in [the example of] Bruce's Beach, that was land that Black people were kicked off of, but it was originally the land of Native people. And no one wants to like sit in that nuance... My goal is not always to know everything, but to sit in that nuance and say: Is there a way to heal because none of this is shit that we started, but what other people imposed... My goal has been to seek out Native communities and to learn and to see how I can be useful to the work that's already happening. – Morgan Dawson, Threshold Philanthropy

I love this collection of responses because each of these collaborators shows nuance in their understanding of what it means to be an ally and what it means to be accountable to those relationships.

When I asked my Native participants about their thoughts on building solidarity with Black communities, they shared both their openness as well as an acknowledgement that it's complicated and nuanced work.

One of my Métis colleagues, Joy Persall, shared some of these potential complications:

The big challenge is around narratives and myths about Native America and Black America. And I think that's actually a huge narrative to try to shift. But so important... I don't think that there is much to be gained by us segregating ourselves as the Native community – especially in the current state of this country. And that we would be far better at being in solidarity with allies if we really want equity and justice for all of us. I don't think we'll ever have [all of our] land back, like when Europeans came here. But how do we together envision a world that is more equitable and less draining? And not killing itself? Or we'll put it this way: Not killing us in it?

Another Native participant, Carly Bad Heart Bull, shared the importance of creating shared language and meaning in building solidarity between Black and Native communities:

The reality of the world that we live in is [that] we are all human beings. We all have a role to play in taking care of this planet. And making sure that we have a place for future generations to live, healthy food to eat, and clean air to breathe. And so we have to work together. And so if that's through Land Back and reparations... I think sometimes folks can get very caught up in semantics. And I do [think] language is important. The words we use are really important. And so how do we how do we connect those movements with an understanding of not having parameters around them? That folks feel limited? Like reparations, I struggle with that word too, because it feels so like, 'Okay, we're good. We're going to give you this and then we're done.' You know, and I've heard that from other Native folks as well. But if we actually dig into it and talk about the philosophy behind it, the idea behind it, the values behind it - it's so connected to what we're trying to do with Land Back... It is all connected, just as we're all connected. And so how can we... how can we have those conversations and how do we strengthen those connections... so folks in the Black community understand that Land Back benefits all of us. [Everyone benefits from] having Indigenous folks controlling and stewarding this land. And getting money back into Black communities and Native communities, how are we all going to benefit from that? I think we're stronger together.

Lastly, one of my Native participants who is doing work in building solidarity across the reparations and Land Back movements shared a unique insight:

I think what each community is looking for is ultimately the same with unique nuances. We're looking for repair, we're looking for a return on what was taken from Native peoples [and] that was land. And it's a spiritual thing. It's a cultural thing. Repatriation [of land] is so much deeper than a transaction. I think that's an important nuance that not a lot of folks may understand. Right, because reparations are transactional, it is a payout. But there's an opportunity for Black folks [in seeking] funding for reparations to go deeper than that. And I've been saying this in our reparations work that they need to embody a spirit of reparations, right? So, when you get that check, because I believe it's going to happen... we're close to seeing a lot of progress. When you get that money, how can you receive that gift in a way that it facilitates healing and you as a Black person? And where's the opportunity for the white people who are paying reparations to receive healing through that transaction? And so I hope that we as Native people have a different understanding of it. That we have access to the

return [of land] from a spiritual cultural way that that can be shared with Black people who may not see it that way.

Despite the potential barriers that these quotes might reveal, each of these participants has been active in and committed to building solidarity with Black communities and other BIPOC communities throughout their careers. Just because the work is complicated and nuanced does not mean that it's not worth pursuing. What I heard was the need to purposefully create more spaces to build solidarity, to build one another's capacity to understand these liberatory movements, and to find ways to learn from one another in ways that strategically benefit each project.

### What does it Mean for Philanthropy to be in Solidarity with Native Communities?

**Figure 13**

*Top foundations by grant dollars explicitly benefitting Native Americans, 2015-2016*

Note. Image credit: Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy (2019), pg. 17

TOP FOUNDATIONS BY GRANT DOLLARS EXPLICITLY BENEFITTING NATIVE AMERICANS, 2015 AND 2016					
	Foundation (excludes public charities)	State	Amount	% Total dollars awarded	No. of grants
1	W.K. Kellogg Foundation	MI	\$ 52,549,941	8.9	101
2	NoVo Foundation	NY	28,016,062	4.7	94
3	Margaret A. Cargill Foundation	MN	22,852,167	3.9	52
4	Bush Foundation	MN	14,286,573	2.4	67
5	Northwest Area Foundation	MN	12,437,976	2.1	69
6	The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation	NY	11,825,500	2.0	14
7	Ford Foundation	NY	11,550,000	2.0	14
8	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	WA	10,778,223	1.8	11
9	Lilly Endowment Inc.	IN	10,270,400	1.7	7
10	The California Endowment	CA	9,820,352	1.7	98
11	Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	CA	9,283,044	1.6	8
12	Rasmuson Foundation	AK	8,567,718	1.5	103
13	The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	NJ	7,855,126	1.3	28
14	The Christensen Fund	CA	4,033,350	0.7	48
15	Kalliopeia Foundation	CA	4,014,875	0.7	54

Source: Candid, 2019. Excludes grantmaking public charities. Includes grants awarded to grantmaking intermediaries. Percentages are based on the total that includes grants awarded to grantmaking intermediaries

In the introduction and review of the literature on how philanthropy has served and not served Native communities, I traced a few promising examples of foundations that are in deeper relationship with—and making commitments to better resourcing—Native communities. According to Candid’s last detailed report from the fiscal year 2015-2016, the top foundations by grant dollars that explicitly benefit Native Americans (and that are mentioned within the scope of this dissertation) are: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, NoVo Foundation, Bush Foundation, Northwest Area Foundation, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and The California Endowment (Native Americans in Philanthropy & Candid, 2019).

The Ford Foundation has held a long-term commitment to funding communities of color, including a focus on Black and Native communities. They continue to provide some of the largest grants to some of the largest Native-led organizations, including Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, First Nations Development Institute, Native Voices Rising, Native Americans in Philanthropy, and Native American Rights Fund (Ford Foundation, 2024). The Northwest Area Foundation has been explicit about the sources of its wealth and coupled that with making a 40% giving pledge to Native communities in its eight-state service area. The Bush Foundation made a \$100 million investment in Black and Native communities as a form of reparative giving including seeding NDN Collective with \$50 million so that they could create the Collective Abundance Fund. Lastly, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is another dedicated funder who has also prioritized funding for racial healing and continues to explore the framework for a national truth and reconciliation process.

One might ask if moving resources to an historically under-resourced community is the same as being in solidarity? That is an important question as solidarity requires not just action

but alignment of values and working to further the collective goals of liberation and decolonization. Based on my experience in the field, I would argue that foundations are rarely in solidarity as institutions, but that the people who serve within these institutions can be. So, when we support the political education, organizing tactics, and flexing of positional power of program officers, senior leadership, and trustees within philanthropy, we support their ability to serve as allies and people who might be quietly working behind the scenes to act in solidarity.

### **Recommendations for How Philanthropy can be a Greater Ally**

In this section I want to share some recommendations for how the philanthropy sector can be a great ally to not just Native-led organizations and movements, but for all communities of color. These are possible antidotes to the critiques offered in chapter 5 and are not as radical as some might think. In fact, these recommendations have already been taken up by more progressive foundations as ways to minimize the power dynamics in the field and more equitably redistribute resources.

#### ***Recommendation 1: Embrace trust-based philanthropy.***

Nearly half of the participants in this research study advocated for the philanthropy sector to take a more relational approach toward grantmaking by instilling more trust into the relationship between foundations and grantees. During the first year of the pandemic in 2020, many foundations sought to be more responsive to the crisis by moving money to organizations faster and with less restrictions. A group of foundation leaders worked on a set of core practices that advocated that funders provide general support (as opposed to project-only support), simplify the grant application and grant reporting processes, and consider making

multi-year commitments instead of requiring grantees to re-apply each year. In recent years, this concept has become more commonplace throughout the sector and has become known as “trust-based philanthropy”. The concept has since been further developed into the Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, which has gained the support of more than 1,000 funders to sign a pledge to adopt components of the model (Daniels, 2024).

The Project describes itself as:

This movement is creating a sector in which there is mutual accountability between funders and nonprofits, and wherein philanthropic systems and structures reflect the needs and dreams of communities. To get there, funders are working to change the power dynamics and structural barriers that too often get in the way of nonprofits achieving their intended impact. Ultimately, we believe philanthropy will be more strategic, rewarding, and impactful if funders approach their relationships with grantee partners from a place of trust and collaboration rather than compliance and control (Trust-Based Philanthropy Project, 2024).

The Trust-Based Philanthropy Project further outlines six practices that foundation staff should embody to build deeper and more trusting grantmaking relationships: 1) provide multi-year general support without restrictions; 2) “do your homework” to get to know the key issues and begin to pre-vet organizations for funding; 3) streamline both the grant application and reporting processes; 4) become more transparent and responsive to uphold the foundation’s accountability; 5) solicit feedback, listen, and be open to change; 6) offer grant partners support beyond the grant dollars by opening up their networks.

I heard from some of my participants about what happens when trust is not extended by foundations to grantees. Lack of trust leads to more bureaucratic red tape beyond what is

required for due diligence<sup>47</sup> by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Lack of trust also hinders building the types of deeper relationships required to develop long-term strategy and partnership between funders and nonprofits. Lastly, I heard from Native leaders that foundations should go even further with trust-based philanthropy and begin to consider other models of redistributing wealth to BIPOC-led organizations beyond the traditional grant structure, such as transferring endowment wealth.

***Recommendation 2: Consider building out participatory grantmaking models that involve more community members from historically underfunded communities to increase foundations' external accountability to communities of color.***

While participatory grantmaking models might seem like a new trend in the field, my participants voiced the need for recognition that giving has long had its roots in Indigenous communities and African American traditions of mutual aid. In other words, we already have the capacity to make decisions about giving. In order to reduce power dynamics in the grantmaking process, one Native participant advocated for “more community voice and sharing of power in the decision-making”. While it is common for donors to have some power in where their money goes, in these models, the donors do not have any input into where grant dollars are allocated. Instead, the people most impacted by the issues are the decisionmakers.

Social justice philanthropy has already implemented these models in the forms of giving circles and community-led grant review processes. The giving project (or giving circle) model was honed by Social Justice Fund Northwest and has been since replicated by many other

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<sup>47</sup> The IRS requirements are fairly straightforward - to receive a grant an organization needs to hold nonprofit status (often as a 501c3), be incorporated under the IRS, state, or be Tribally chartered as a 7871, and demonstrate they exist for public good and have a non-discrimination cause in their articles of incorporation.

progressive funders, including the Hawai'i People's Fund. Research collaborator Micky Huihui shared some of the curriculum and resources that she has developed since Hawai'i People's Fund launched their Giving Project in 2021, including a detailed Social (In)Justice Timeline that highlights key moments in U.S. history that have directly impacted the Hawaiian Islands. It is important for giving project participants to learn about settler colonialism in Hawai'i, beginning with the armed invasion in 1893 – which marked the end of the peaceful reign of Queen Lili'uokalani and the beginning of the United States annexation<sup>48</sup> – which resulted in the theft and exploitation of the land by sugar plantation owners (Liliuokalani, 1898; Coffman, 2016).

Native Voices Rising (NVR) takes a different approach to participatory grantmaking by recruiting forty community reviewers to screen, review, and make grant decisions. NVR's community-led grantmaking is "humanizing and deeply appreciated by grant partners by exemplifying what it means to do grantmaking 'for the people and by the people'" (Arviso & Yepa, 2023, pg. 7). Native community reviewers are better positioned to understand the work of Native-led organizations because they come from those communities and have personally faced some of the unique challenges to building power in urban Native or rural Tribal communities. NVR's model is "empowering for NVR's Community Reviewers and is a demonstration of the sovereignty NVR is moving towards" (Arviso & Yepa, 2023, pg. 7). NVR is also building the capacity of its community reviewers by helping them gain an expanded perspective of the ways in which Native people are using tribal sovereignty and self-determination to organize for change at the community and national levels. For more details on

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<sup>48</sup> For more on the settler colonial history of Hawai'i, I suggest reading both Liliuokalani (1898) and Coffman (2016).

NVR's model and its ten years of demonstrated impact, please see the *Native Voices Rising 10-Year Impact Report* in the Appendix.

***Recommendation 3: Redistribute larger amounts of money for long-term periods to community and consider longer 10-year “generational” commitments to undo harm. In order to fund this significant increase, begin to release the endowments.***

The Native leaders in the philanthropic sector had strong and insightful recommendations about how the philanthropy sector could provide more unrestricted money over significantly longer timeframes. In order to heal from the intergenerational impacts of colonization, Native communities cannot do that in a one-year or even three-year grant cycle. They need deep investment that mirrors the lifecycle of a generation. In summer 2022, I facilitated a series of Native community listening sessions for an institutional funder in Oregon. While many themes emerged from that process, at the heart of what Native and Tribal communities wanted was “community well-being across generations” and their accompanying recommendation that the foundation should consider “increased and longer-term public and private investment in community priorities”, which was voiced by one Native Elder as “generational” funding commitments.

Several of my participants suggested that foundations should carve out a portion of their annual grant budgets – or even endowments – specifically for Native-led organizations and Tribes. One Native leader shared his frustration at the lack of progress, but he also envisioned a potential solution:

I am beyond disenchanted at the lack of progress that we're making to increase investments to Native-led organizations and Indigenous communities. Again, I don't see the point of doing any more reports... Not to say that all of our other efforts are not worthwhile, [but] they're not making a significant difference. And

I think as long as we're having to work within the current structures, there are just far too many off-ramps that will prevent Native communities and Native-led organizations from getting even parity with the kinds of resources we should be receiving. Not including sort of anything that's close to the impact of colonization and resource extraction and so forth... So, that's why I'm saying we need to be in a place where it is a sort of an expectation across the board. Like Northwest Area Foundation, they're a great example of this [with their 40% commitment]. More foundations should be doing that kind of thing, where [the commitment] is a percentage. And, even going one step further, to actually move it towards Native-led grantmaking – whether it's an actual formula – or just making sure that people know: this is a carve out [that is] going to go to Tribal communities and Native organizations. And you just come up with a plan.

Another Native foundation CEO was adamant that instead of spending time developing Native-focused grant portfolios, foundations should redistribute their wealth directly through Native and Black-led intermediaries who know our communities and know how to quickly move funding into them.

While these recommendations might seem out-of-reach or unrealistic to some foundation leaders, there are inspiring examples of foundations that are taking this leap. Kataly Foundation CEO Nwamaka Agbo is very clear about her strategy:

For Kataly and for myself as a leader, engaging in these practices has led to a commitment to reinvest our assets in community-based projects as a spend-out strategy over the coming years. In addition to our commitment to “move the money” we have articulated a theory of change that specifies *who* we move the money to (Black and Indigenous communities, and all communities of color); *how* we move those resources (non-extractive integrated capital investments, relational grantmaking, solidarity philanthropy, etc.); and *what* we resource (community wealth building projects and strategies; environmental justice campaigns and organizations; and mindfulness and healing justice initiatives) (Agbo, 2021).

The goal of foundations shouldn't be to exist in perpetuity. Spend down models can be very impactful as we have witnessed through the Kataly Foundation's transformative giving, which will be highlighted more in the Epilogue.

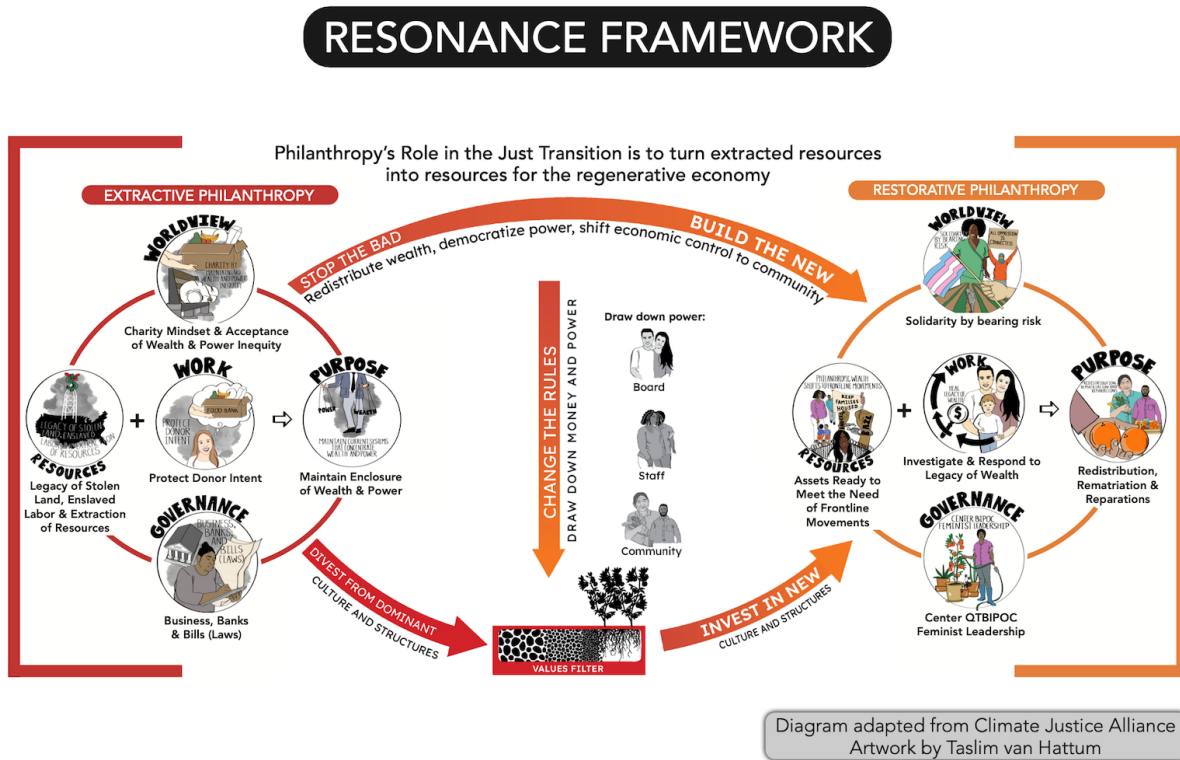
**Recommendation 4: Explore the possibilities of more restorative, regenerative, and transformational models of philanthropy.**

As mentioned in the introduction and in Agbo’s words, there are already new models for what philanthropy could look like. In 2024, the Justice Funders published the second edition of *The Spectrum of Extractive to Restorative to Regenerative Philanthropy* as part of their *Resonance: A Framework for Philanthropic Transformation*.

**Figure 14**

*The Resonance Framework draws inspiration from Just Transition strategies and applies it to philanthropy.*

Note. Image Credit: Resonance Framework, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Justice Funders, 2024, pg. 31)



In imagining what justice could look like in the philanthropy sector, Justice Funders used the same principles from the Just Transition<sup>49</sup> framework in the environmental justice movement. As philanthropic institutions move along the spectrum from extractive to restorative philanthropy, they fall into one of these categories:

- *“More Extractive:* Philanthropy that perpetuates power dynamics between givers and receivers, with the expectation of a financial return to the ultimate benefit of the investor, even at the expense of communities. Foundations should maintain control of and grow their resources indefinitely to exist in perpetuity.
- *Less Extractive:* Philanthropy that addresses symptoms of social and ecological problems without tackling root causes of injustice.
- *Restorative:* Philanthropy that repairs the harms of the past endured by communities that have been subjected to exploitation within the extractive economy. Foundations are rooted in and accountable to the organizing and visions of historically marginalized communities.
- *Regenerative:* Philanthropy that actively builds new economic systems that transfer the management and control of financial resources away from institutions and toward communities that have been impacted by wealth accumulation and the extractive economy.
- *Transformation:* Wealth is redistributed, power is democratized, and economic control is shifted to communities in a way that is truly regenerative for people and the planet” (Justice Funders, 2024).

In this framework, philanthropy can only transform itself when it reaches the *Restorative, Regenerative, and Transformation* stages. At those stages, they can support and resource the reparations and the Land Back movements by repairing the harms of the past and transferring control of wealth and power.

### **Imagining Decolonial & Re-Indigenized Native Futures...**

To close this chapter, I want to share my Native participants’ responses to the final questions I asked during our interviews: *What would the future look like for our Native*

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<sup>49</sup> For more about the “Just Transition” framework, please see the Just Transition Alliance as described by the Climate Justice Alliance at: <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/>

*communities if we could truly decolonize and be properly resourced to (re)build our Native nations? What is the role that philanthropy can play?*

Walker Rive Paiute Tribal member Joni Crines (formerly with Na'ah Illahee Fund until she retired) shared what she imagined for us when we are properly resourced as Native people:

I see a vibrant community led by Native people for Native people. I see a huge cultural revitalization: I envision Native people being bilingual with their original language being spoken as often if not more than English, and a return to our traditional foods. I envision robust Native communities where nobody's left behind and everybody's cared for. There is zero homelessness, where everybody has a warm bed, a place to call home, and healthy food. A caring community with company coming by to visit so no one is lonely or left behind. A community where children, women, and girls are safe every moment of their lives. A robust healthy community filled with ceremony and healing happening [in our communities] all the time like they used to.

A Santa Clara Pueblo man with decades of experience in the field shared his vision of the future:

The ideal state is that our communities have the resources that we deserve, both by way of actual repatriation of our lands and our resources, the restoration or resurgence of our traditional knowledge. That those resources [are] returned to us in a way that is consistent with our culture and with our values. Where we are not having to navigate imposed systems and structures to simply secure resources that are a reflection of the damage that has been done to us as Native people. There isn't this power imbalance over those who have control over resources, including money. And that we aren't in a somehow lesser, more dependent position [because] that sort of system doesn't exist anymore. And I believe that we'll have to [have] a combination of us generating resources for ourselves and engaging those who are benefiting from the extraction of our resources. And I would hope for our communities that we are able to really reexamine what is truly important to us. Because so much of what we may consider to be success is intertwined with values that have been imposed on us. And it isn't to say that we don't have the right to evolve and to change and to adapt. That's the only reason we're all still here as Indigenous peoples. But it does make me think back to my grandmother's time, and to the times before her. And at the core of what were... what were the most important resources that we had our language, our traditions, our dances, our ability to sustain ourselves based on the resources that were linked to us, by virtue of the places that we were, where we replaced our Creator, into our migrations are

interdependent on each other, that at its core was made possible by a kind of love that I feel we are rapidly losing. And I say this because it could end up being that someday we are the wealthiest of communities in terms of money. And we [could be] poorer than we've ever been. And I think about that a lot, especially around language... But if we ever lose that opportunity, or the valuing of what language means to us, all the money in the world can't bring that... can bring that back to us.

Flandreau Santee Tribal member, Carly Bad Heart Bull, who serves as the Executive Director of Native Ways Federation and a board member for Native Americans in Philanthropy, shared this reflection:

It would look like we're speaking our languages. Our kids know how to pray in our languages, but also have daily conversation and not just [name] animals and numbers. It would look like being able to fully embed our values and our way of being into to everything that we do. And again, that goes back to our people knowing what we need. We have just haven't had the resources. We haven't had the support to live the way that we know we should be living. And because so many of our people are in poverty and are in survival mode, we forget that. I remember one of my language teachers said to me once [when] I was struggling with learning my language. And he said to me, 'you need to stop thinking that the language is going to die, it's not going to die. The language is going to live when you pass it on. The language is there, it's out there. Your access to it is what you're trying to find.' And so the world I want to live in is where all of our people, all of our kids have access and opportunity to thrive as Indigenous people and not have to dream about a world that we want to live in, but to be fully present and have faith and understanding in honoring our roles, being able to feel proud and to feel like you're doing your ancestors proud and to feel like you're leaving something for those future generations... How can we create a world where we all have access, we all have opportunity, and the ability not only to dream, but to live in that dream.

A Cochiti Pueblo woman who works in philanthropy shared her hopes for the future:

I look forward to a fruitful future where we move forward from deficit narratives in philanthropy and also within American society. I look forward to the day when we are no longer labeled as commodities within the system of institutionalism and when we can be treated with equality. Decolonization means to Indigenize the way we do things, including our frameworks, our strategies, how we talk/think/provide support and love. I believe Indigenizing is a love language that can further practice reciprocity through acts embedded within philanthropy because these are traditional teachings and epistemes for us. When I look at

how I can decolonize my daily life, I think about the systems in my world that put walls around my thinking and living, including time, work, and social media. I try to break loose from those paradigms and colonial expectations to be more holistically-centered so that I can fully align with those I care for – Family, Community, and greater extended networks. I believe that philanthropy can continue to play a role in this by providing opportunities for capacity-building of leaders and for believing in nonprofit leaders and organizations, that they know their communities best. It is discouraging when funders ‘tap out’ because they aren’t hearing flash words that are trending in the post-pandemic world. I look forward to [when] these acts of charity shift to being acts of solidarity.

I wanted to end this chapter by coming full circle and sharing the hopeful reflection from Tracy Rector, who is of mixed heritage (Black, Choctaw, Jewish and European descent) and whose more cynical words opened this chapter:

The future, by necessity, will be more holistic. It's not a romantic vision of what it was [but rather] what it could be. And I feel that Native peoples are incredibly dynamic and diverse. And there's so many ideas yet to come forward. And so in terms of imagination, I think it's just an open vision of what could be because there's so much yet to be known as Indigenous peoples are stepping into the most amazing opportunities that [we have been] working towards for a long time. There are just limitless dreams ready to become reality and my imagination is just open to those possibilities?

Despite the complicated realities of where we are in this moment, I remain hopeful about what our decolonized and re-Indigenized futures might be.

## Chapter 7: Epilogue: Land Back in Payahuunadü

Colonization is a wild experience. You look up and realize you've been skillfully indoctrinated into believing you're part of an empire that was actually forced upon you through violence. You are not the empire. You are among the natural resources being extracted by the empire. – Bree Newsome, Grassroots Organizer & Activist (@BreeNewsome, reposted on Instagram)

### Figure 15

*A late June evening at the Three Creeks 5-acre property in Payahuunadü, which was returned to Indigenous care when it was purchased in spring 2023 by the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission from a private landowner.*

Note. Photo credit: Dana Arviso



I want to open with a story that connects my home community to larger movements like the ongoing struggle to reclaim Native lands and retain access to clean water. This is a critical issue for Native people across many Tribal Nations and we witnessed it powerfully emerge in

2016 as the Mní Wičóni (Water is Life) movement<sup>50</sup> when the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe fought against Energy Transfer Partners to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. While the Land Back movement existed for decades before it was popularized by various campaigns, it has gained more traction and understanding among non-Native people in recent years. I want to share what an example of Land Back<sup>51</sup> can look like for a Tribal community as it can take many forms and possibilities.

When people ask me where I am from, I often hesitate before I answer. Home for me is a complicated set of geographies. I was born and partially raised on my traditional homelands on the Navajo reservation that spans the Four Corners region of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado. I've also lived as an urban Native person in the Pacific Northwest cities of Anchorage, Alaska and Seattle, Washington for a combined 25 years. But when I think of where I'm forever drawn to return and where my Paiute family has lived since time immemorial—it's a place called Bishop, California. In terms of landscape, I often describe it poetically as "where the desert meets the mountains" since we are located between Death Valley and Yosemite National Parks. But this isn't always what the landscape has looked like. My Grandma Dorothy shared stories with us when we were growing up about how she used to work in the fruit orchards and local farms as a young woman. Decades later these stories didn't reconcile with how much the land has changed as most of the orchards dried up long ago.

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<sup>50</sup> For more context on the Mní Wičóni movement, please see: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/water-life-rise-mni-wiconi-movement>

<sup>51</sup> For more context on the Land Back movement, please see: <https://landback.org>

Like many placenames in the Owens Valley, Bishop is named after a white settler, Samuel A. Bishop,<sup>52</sup> who recognized that the land was ideal for ranching and farming because of the abundant water sources that come from the snowpack in the mountains. Of course, there were already Native people living here who had long known this and had a name for their own homelands: Payahuunadü or the “Land of Flowing Water” in our Nüümü (Paiute) language<sup>53</sup>. But for most people who haven’t grown up in the Eastern Sierra, they’ve never heard of Payahuunadü. It’s a part of central California that’s so isolated and unfamiliar, it feels almost hidden away in the shadows cast by the epic heights of the Sierra Nevada mountains. In my experience, the only people who recognize its name are either avid outdoor enthusiasts, who have traveled through on their way to hike, ski, backpack, or fish, or have some personal connection to the people. But if they knew the significance of this place in terms of what it has sacrificed to provide critical resources to the citizens of Los Angeles, I would hope it would be etched in their memory like it is in mine.

**Figure 16**

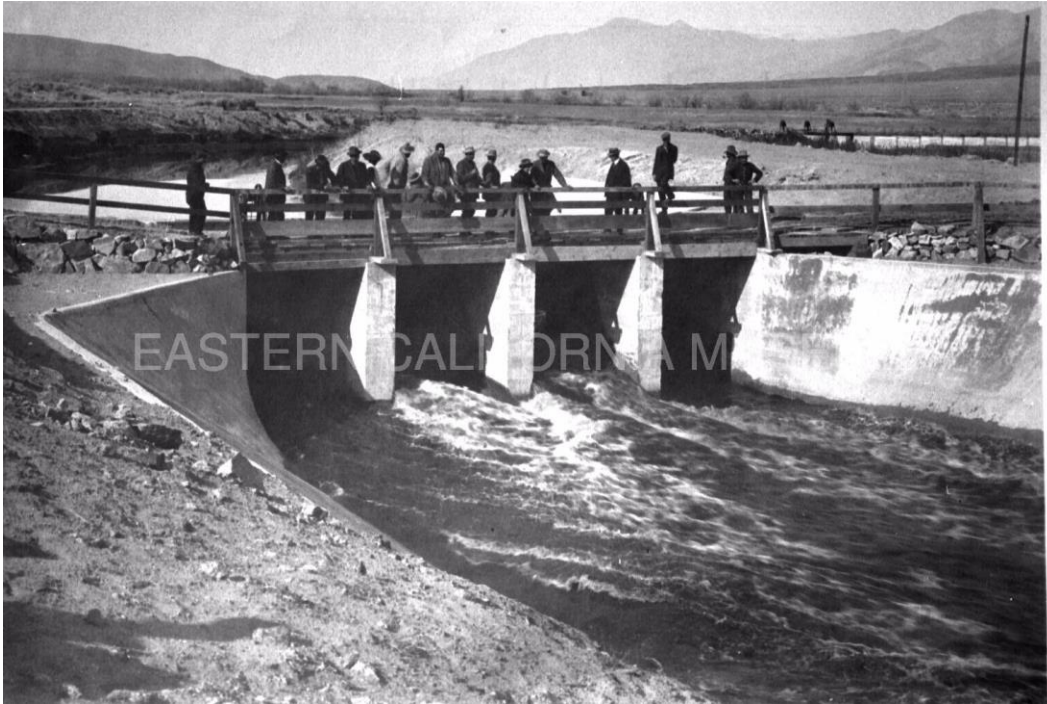
*1913 photo of L.A. Aqueduct Project leadership at a celebration event where they are watching the Owens River Water being diverted through aqueduct intake gates to start the 233-mile journey towards Los Angeles.*

Note. Photo credit: Alex Ross Collection, Eastern Sierra Museum, Entry/Object ID: 2012.16.231

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<sup>52</sup> A brief history of the City of Bishop can be found at: [https://www.cityofbishop.com/about/city\\_history.php](https://www.cityofbishop.com/about/city_history.php)

<sup>53</sup> An Indigenous counter history of Bishop & Payahuunadü can be found here: <https://walking-water.org/2019/11/30/payahuunadu-land-of-the-flowing-water/>



For the past 100 years, “The Land of Flowing Water” has forcibly provided its water to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power at the cost of its own resource depletion. After construction in 1905-1913, the L.A. Aqueduct began diverting water from our valley through a system of aqueducts and pipes that run a total of 419 miles,<sup>54</sup> from the Owens River to the Los Angeles basin, and have the capacity to move 570,000 acre-feet per year. This directly contributed to the explosive growth of Los Angeles because without this water, existing local water sources would have been insufficient to keep up with the rapidly expanding population’s need. The City of Los Angeles used unethical tactics<sup>55</sup> to buy up the land and

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<sup>54</sup> The total length of the Los Angeles Aqueduct is 419 miles. When it opened in 1913, the first section length was 233 miles, but an additional 137 miles was added in the second section in 1970. This allowed more groundwater to be pumped. A full chronological history of the LA Aqueduct construction can be found here:

<https://www.inyowater.org/documents/reports/owens-valley-water-history-chronology/>

<sup>55</sup> Depictions of this history have appeared in non-fiction books like “Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water” (1993) by Marc Reisner, documentary films like “Manzanar, Diverted: When Water Becomes Dust” (2022) by director Ann Kaneko, and fictional movies like “Chinatown” (1974) by director Roman Polanski.

secure the water rights, thus ensuring that they could continue to extract this natural resource well into the future.

In order to protect its rights, Los Angeles began purchasing land and accompanying water rights in the Owens Valley and converting cropland to a less water-intensive use: cattle grazing. Irrigated acreage in the valley dropped from about 75,000 acres in 1920 to 23,625 acres in 1940. Early on, in 1924, area ranchers and businessmen feared for the valley's agricultural future and waged a "water war" dynamiting the aqueduct 17 times in a futile attempt to stop the water from flowing south. With Los Angeles as landlord, the Owens Valley developed into a recreation area with leased rather than owner-occupied farms. Today Los Angeles controls nearly all the land on the valley floor. Until recent court decisions reduced the amount of exported water, valley water provided up to 75 percent of the city's annual supply. After years of legal battles, Inyo County and the city of Los Angeles came to an agreement in 1991 to jointly manage the valley's water resources and regulate the amount of exported water based on environmental effects.<sup>56</sup>

The ranchers and businesses suffered as Los Angeles continued to buy up local parcels of land in order to secure the water rights. "By 1933, the City of Los Angeles had purchased 85 percent of the valley's residential and commercial property and 95 percent of the valley's farm and ranch land."<sup>57</sup> The City of Los Angeles was met with continuous resistance from white landowners throughout the construction and early years of operation, as documented by a 1925 Inyo Register headline that boldly declares in all caps: "GREED OF CITY RUINS THE OWENS VALLEY."<sup>58</sup> A recap of this turbulent history is documented in a 2008 timeline<sup>59</sup> published by the

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<sup>56</sup> More about the Los Angeles Aqueduct history can be found here:

<https://www.watereducation.org/aquapedia/los-angeles-aqueduct-and-owens-valley>

<sup>57</sup> For more on how much land and water rights the City of Los Angeles acquired, see: <https://walking-water.org/2019/11/30/payahuunadu-land-of-the-flowing-water/>

<sup>58</sup> "Greed of the City Ruins Owens Valley", January 7, 1925, *Inyo Register*. The full text of this newspaper can be found as part of the J.D. Black Papers in the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the William H. Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University and found online at: <https://lmu.digitalcollections.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/inyo-register-and-owens-valley-herald-supplement-number-1-january-7-1925/20364>

<sup>59</sup> The full chronology of the Owens Valley Water History between the City of Los Angeles and Owens Valley can be found here: <https://www.inyowater.org/documents/reports/owens-valley-water-history-chronology/>

Inyo County Water Department including this surprising turn of events: “[In] 1925 Merchants demand reparations for loss of business due to Los Angeles’ purchase of the valley’s farm lands; in response, a state law is passed that allows Los Angeles to purchase properties in towns. Los Angeles announces that it would purchase any commercial, residential or agricultural property offered for sale.”

It's fascinating to me that within only a 20-year span, white landowners were making a case for reparations because of the financial harm that they experienced as a result of the water extraction and changes to the land. However, the most shocking part of what Los Angeles did to further secure their land and water rights was to strip the local Tribes of the water rights that were attached to their reservation trust lands. In the lesser-known history that the Bishop Paiute Tribe has had to document as part of their 2011 legal case<sup>60</sup> against the City of Los Angeles, they learned that:

The decline in farming and ranching operations in the valley resulted in loss of employment for many of the Paiute. Los Angeles then turned to the lands held in trust for the Nüümü by the federal government. Los Angeles was successful in having Executive Orders revoked that had set aside nearly 70,000 acres of land for the Nüümü. Los Angeles issued a series of reports called ‘Owens River Valley, California, Indian Problem’. The Indian Problem reports said that the Indians were ‘homeless’, ‘scattered’, ‘squatting’, using immense quantities of water from streams for ‘irrigation, wastage of water’. Los Angeles’ solution was to remove or relocate the Indians. Los Angeles reported that the benefits of grouping the Indians would mean ‘better control’ and ‘the question of land acquirement and title definition fixed unquestionably’. It was also during this time that Los Angeles and the United States coerced Nüümü that were fortunate to have land allotments into selling these lands (many along creeks and streams with water rights) for a fraction of what Los Angeles was paying white landowners. In many cases, Los Angeles purchased Indian Allotments for one-quarter of the price they paid others. Eventually, Los Angeles and the United States government agreed to move the Nüümü onto three separate reservations in a land exchange whereby

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<sup>60</sup> The legal opinion for the Paiute-Shoshone Indians v. City of Los Angeles can be found here: <https://casetext.com/case/paiute-shoshone-indians-v-city-of-los-angeles>

the United States traded 2,913 acres of land for 1,391 acres of Los Angeles owned land. The Land Exchange was authorized by an Act of Congress in 1937.<sup>61</sup>

This is just one painful example of racism and environmental injustice against Tribes in California's history. There are many examples across California's history where Native populations were decimated, lands stolen, and Tribes displaced starting with the California Gold Rush in 1848 and continuing to the present as natural resources continue to be extracted for profit. There is a storymap by the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission that recounts the long history of the Paiute people from first contact with white settlers during the California Gold Rush to present and shows the loss of land using pictographs.<sup>62</sup> Of the remaining 5% of land that isn't owned by Los Angeles, private landowners own 1.6% and the three Tribes collectively own 1/3 of 1%<sup>63</sup>.

One of the most salient points that I want to make through telling this story is that the City of Los Angeles managed to take control over what was once an abundant natural resource and create the conditions under which Tribal people now suffer from a scarcity of water that has been exacerbated by decades of drought. This historical context is important to understanding the significance of regaining and rematriating land in our traditional territories. To rematriate is "to restore a people to their rightful place in sacred relationship with their ancestral land and lifeways" (Sogora Té Land Trust, 2021).

### **The Three Creeks Collective: An Unfolding Story of Rematriation**

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<sup>61</sup> For more on the legal explanation of how Los Angeles colluded with the United States government to strip the Paiute people of their land and water rights, see: <https://walking-water.org/2019/11/30/payahuunadu-land-of-the-flowing-water/>

<sup>62</sup> Owens Valley Indian Water Commission Storymap: <https://www.oviw.com/storymap/>

<sup>63</sup> OVIWC's GoFundMe campaign description for Three Creeks: [https://www.gofundme.com/f/OVIWC-WATER-LAND-BACK?fbclid=IwAR1gzNmtEwdweQC2wiE\\_irV1KGycMXJtPYWz1S4gMD2mEWptK1vk5T1cbc](https://www.gofundme.com/f/OVIWC-WATER-LAND-BACK?fbclid=IwAR1gzNmtEwdweQC2wiE_irV1KGycMXJtPYWz1S4gMD2mEWptK1vk5T1cbc)

In the early spring of 2023, the coalition of Tribes that constitute the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission (OVIWC), with support from Three Creek Collective, were able to buy back a five-acre parcel of their homelands from a local white landowner. The mission of OVIWC is to “work together closely and cooperatively with Payahuunadü Tribes to advance self-sufficiency and sovereignty, protect and promote culture and traditions, increase sustainability and food security, preserve and restore land and habitat, improve water quality and increase water supply, increase Indigenous farming and ranching, improve environmental and human health conditions in the Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra, and to assist Tribes with securing water rights settlements that include land acquisition.”<sup>64</sup>

Beginning in September 2022, a partnership began to form. With an introduction from Teena Pugliese and Jen Schlaich, OVIWC became aware of this opportunity to buy back some of its original land from a private white landowner in an area south of the town of Big Pine, where three creeks converge to create a natural oasis in the desert terrain. However, they needed to raise \$900,000 in less than three months in order to bid on the property. As a result, the Three Creeks Collective was born and quickly organized a GoFundMe campaign with this ambitious goal. While the campaign started out slowly by fundraising \$153,856 from 219 Native and non-Native donors at the end of the 2022, by the deadline of February 21, 2023, it had raised \$923,760 and met its goal to buy back the land. By mid-August 2023, this fundraising campaign had raised an additional million dollars for a total of \$1,947,410 towards an expanded goal of \$2,000,000. While the number of individual donors increased to more than 1200 who contributed amounts as small as \$5, some of the largest contributions came from foundations:

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<sup>64</sup> The mission statement for OVIWC can be found at: <https://www.oviw.org>

\$600,000 from Accelerate Resilience in Los Angeles and \$250,000 from the Kataly Foundation in San Francisco.

While Three Creek Collective aims to build programming that weaves together culture, food sovereignty, land stewardship, water protection, healing, relationship building, education, and art<sup>65</sup>, the goal for this recently re-acquired land is straightforward: provide an opportunity for Tribal members can spend time rebuilding a relationship with this land and water. During a visit home in June 2023, I attended a planning meeting for Indigenous Women Hike and was able to finally see it for myself and walk through a portion of this very special place. What was clear from talking with one of the existing stewards and advisory council members is that for the Tribes that reside within Payahuunadü, this is the beginning of a process of rematriation for our communities. As the OVIWC leads a process of envisioning how to use this space, it's clear that they want the local Tribal community to dream and begin to imagine what relationship they want to have with this piece of reclaimed ancestral territory. In this spirit of centering Tribal community needs, in August 2023, the OVIWC held its annual Environmental Youth Camp at Three Creeks for the first time. It brings me tremendous joy as a community member and donor to see Native youth back on land that was rightfully theirs to begin with, and to experience land-based education that connects science learning with rematriation.

**Figure 17**

*24th Annual Owens Valley Tribal Environmental Youth Camp at Three Creeks Collective*

Note. Photo credit & source: Owens Valley Indian Water Commission, August 2023, Facebook

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<sup>65</sup> OVIWC's GoFundMe campaign description for Three Creeks: [https://www.gofundme.com/f/OVIWC-WATER-LAND-BACK?fbclid=IwAR1gzNmtEwdweQC2wiE\\_irV1KGycMXJtPYWz1S4gMD2mEWptK1vk5T1cbc](https://www.gofundme.com/f/OVIWC-WATER-LAND-BACK?fbclid=IwAR1gzNmtEwdweQC2wiE_irV1KGycMXJtPYWz1S4gMD2mEWptK1vk5T1cbc)



During that visit to the Three Creeks property, I also had an opportunity to connect with one of the land stewards, Teena Pugliese. As we toured the different spaces that have been built on the land, including an earthen building where talking circles and ceremonies have been held, Teena shared with us a bit more of the story of how the land purchase happened, including how the fundraising campaign was launched, and how she made a video to help bring the story to life. A few things stood out to me as she described how she saw a unique opportunity emerge when the property owner considered selling the land, but the initial deal with a Bay Area nonprofit didn't go through. Instead, Teena introduced her to the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission, and they began to explore a discounted sale in which the land could be rightfully restored back to its original Indigenous inhabitants. Teena explained that she saw

herself as a “bridge builder” because she was both a mentee to the property owner, Gigi Coyle, and a trusted white ally to the local Tribes. This piqued my interest, and a few months later, I reached out to Teena to invite her to participate in this research study, so she could tell me the longer version of what happened. Below is an excerpt of our interview:

Dana: Well, I'm just fascinated by this story, because I don't think I would have known any of this based on what's publicly available. And the story that I'm understanding... I think part of what I'm trying to think about - even as I'm asking these questions – is that there's two parts to this story... There's this story [of the land repatriation] that I'm so curious about... to know what the Water Commission is thinking about in terms of what kinds of like programming will emerge... and what types of things that they'll be able to do now by bringing together Elders and youth to have that opportunity to learn from the land. And then there's this other story of allyship, which is also a really beautiful story that I really had no idea about. I think that it does speak to what you're talking about... [that] a key aspect of allyship is not centering yourself within the relationship, but to be there in a supportive way.

Teena: Thank you for seeing that because that is what I tried to do. I put Gigi in the GoFundMe video for that reason so people could understand she is a big part of this story. I put Jen in because of that, too. I was supposed to be in the video, but it didn't work out because I had no one to film me. So, I was in the video through the narrative as I was the filmmaker and editor. So, that's how I'm in it. But it is an important part of the story. And it was an edge. This is really edgy, because it is Indigenous-led, and like you said, that's one half of the story. And that's something that Gigi really talks about too: how do we be in our wholeness as human beings? How do we be in the wholeness of a narrative? And the story that we share? And I think Teri and Kyndall [from the OVIWC] are doing an amazing job of making sure that part of the story is uplifted, but it's still being buried because it feels... risky... there's a very specific model of [what Land Back means]. And why I love that you said [about how it can exist on a] spectrum. [Returning land], it's on the extreme, and it scares non-Indigenous people, but it makes Indigenous people feel like ‘fuck yes!’ And now on the opposite end of that spectrum, it's like... Where do I belong? Where do I fit into this story? So, it's very polarizing, in a way?

Dana: I think that one of the challenges for the [Land Back] movement is to really be able to lift up [and show] examples of where this has worked. And how did it work? Because what I've heard from a few folks that are more on the legal side, is that it's a lot more complicated than people think... Even that example of the story that I gave earlier [of] a farmer deciding that, ‘I'm not going

to pass this land on or this farming legacy on to my children. So, now what do I do with this land? Oh, I'm just gonna give it away'. It's never that easy. And I think there's a community foundation up in Humboldt County where they're trying to work through questions like, 'how do we create policies and processes to help people do this?' Because taking that intention and actually working through the whole process and transferring land... you don't do it with a handshake. And how to acknowledge people, sift through their intentions, and figure out how to negotiate this... How does this end up being something that's beneficial, all the way around? So, I appreciate you getting into some of the nuances of that.

Teena went on to share that Three Creeks Collective did receive some much-needed and free legal assistance from the Center for Ethical Land Transition, which is supported by the foundation Wend Collective. On their website, the Center describes how they “had the deep honor of supporting all parties in this highly nuanced process involving a discount sale, the formation of a new collective, narrative contract writing, and a short time frame funding campaign. This project closed escrow in February of 2023.”<sup>66</sup> This speaks to the behind-the-scenes complexities of how land transfers actually happen, which is information that is seldom shared. In our longer interview, I was able to ask Teena to clarify and explain the longer version of the process that unfolded. She shared that after some initial exploratory conversations with Gigi, they reached consensus to form the Three Creeks Collective. Teena is a founding member of the Three Creeks Collective along with Jen Schlaich and the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission.

However, I also want to point out that Teena, Jen, and Gigi are white women who have built and sustained relationships over the years with local Tribes across Payahuunadü and have expressed a deep commitment to allyship. Throughout the interview, Teena revealed ways that

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<sup>66</sup> A description of the Center for Ethical Land Transition’s work including a description of how they contributed to the Three Creeks Collective land transfer can be found here: <https://centerelt.org>

she had considered her identity and positionality as a white woman, how to be in service to the Tribes that she had worked for, and how to work in ways that did not center herself at the expense of Native people and causes. Teena shared that during her time living at on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal nation taught her that non-Indigenous people need to be educated about Native people and that's a role allies can and should play. She explains:

It blew my mind how little people know about Indian country in the United States. And these toxic stories that are being shared about well, 'they get free college' and all the stories I had heard while living there... Camp taught me that we need community and living at Standing Rock taught me that non-Indigenous people need to be educated. And they don't need Indigenous people to do it. They need people like me that can actually experience it and be the bridge. I feel like that was like a huge teaching.

She also shared her emerging understanding of what it means to really be in right relationship with and become an ally to Indigenous people by leveraging privilege and power when called upon:

We need community and our communities are just in disarray. Standing Rock was the first time in my life I experienced community. I've never [been] in a place where I was in a constant state of asking, 'how can I be of service?' Like no matter what my role is, I'm going to chop wood and carry water if that's what I need to do for my community. [It showed me] people who are really willing to take care of each other.

Lastly, I want to give proper credit to the landowner and philanthropist Gigi Coyle. Gigi had been working with the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission for about eight years through a project called Walking Water, but she had not approached them to ask if they were interested in purchasing the land. With encouragement from Teena and Jen, she began to realize how important it was to bring this repatriation opportunity to OVIWC. Teena shared more insight, "She spent 5 years looking and listening for [the right opportunity] to present itself, as she understood the importance of [Three Creeks] as a healing center. Even when the

[nonprofit] group she had been asking to purchase the land and continue its care finally came forward to say, ‘yes, we want to purchase it’. She turned it down once she saw our proposal”.

What resulted was a beautiful partnership that continued to involve non-Native people who had been stewarding the land but were passionate about working to support and partner with local Native communities. And while the initial \$900,000 fundraising goal was ambitious, Gigi helped to fundraise nearly \$500,000 of that from her own networks – including people who had been coming to the land to steward and heal over the past twenty-five years. In Teena’s words: “[Gigi] isn't the typical white landowner who decided to sell her land back. She has been an ally for Indigenous communities around the world for over forty years, by holding circles and building cross-cultural communities. We could not have done it without her”.

### **With a Little Help from Our Friends: Land Back in Ohlone Territory**

On March 4, 2024, the Sogorea Té Land Trust shared this inspiring announcement on their social media pages:

Sogorea Te’ Land Trust (STLT) and the Kataly Foundation are proud to announce that Sogorea Te’ Land Trust has received a Shuumi contribution of \$20 million from Kataly Foundation! The Shuumi Land Tax is an annual contribution that non-Indigenous people who live on Lisjan (Ohlone) territory can make to support Sogorea Te’ Land Trust’s rematriation work. ‘Shuumi means gift in the Chochenyo language. This gift gives us the ability to stand in sovereignty in our own self-determination to dream and enact rematriation in a different way. It gives us a foundation to plan long term and lay down the work for the next seven generations,’ said Johnella LaRose (Shoshone Bannock/Carrizo) cofounder Sogorea Te’ Land Trust. As a foundation created in the Bay Area, Kataly wanted to pay Shuumi in the place where its team lives and works. Within philanthropy, there is a common practice of engaging in land acknowledgements, recognizing and naming whose land we live on. Kataly recognizes the importance of these practices, but the Foundation also wanted to take action with one of the more powerful tools at its disposal as a funder: redistributing wealth. This is the single

largest known cash gift to a Native land trust in history. Get in Relatives, we're just getting started!<sup>67</sup>

As much as I'm moved by the enormity and the significance of this gift, I can't help but feel some frustration that Sogorea Té Land Trust had to use that \$20M to buy back the Shellmound space in West Berkeley from developers, who had turned a sacred space into a parking lot.

But given the connection between the Land Back examples of Three Creeks and the West Berkeley Shellmound, I really wanted to understand more about the donor they share in common: Kataly Foundation. Kataly Foundation was established in 2018 with \$445 million and the explicit goal that it will be fully spent down within a decade. Its founder is Regan Pritzker, a Pritzker heir whose family made it wealth off of the Hyatt hotel chain. The Pritzker family has at least two foundations: Libra Foundation (with assets of \$513M in 2020) and Kataly Foundation (with assets of \$457M in 2020). According to the website Influence Watch, "Regan Pritzker is the daughter of Nicholas J. Pritzker, who had been CEO and chairman of the board of Hyatt Hotels Development Corporation. Nicholas Pritzker is also the co-founder of Tao Capital, whose early investments included Uber, Tesla, and SpaceX. The extended Pritzker family is estimated to be worth over \$32.5 billion."<sup>68</sup>

From what I've seen within the sector, Libra and Kataly Foundations are doing some of the most progressive philanthropy that I've seen to date. Under the Libra Foundation, the goal of Democracy Frontlines Fund<sup>69</sup> is "to leverage millions of new dollars to fund Black organizing

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<sup>67</sup> Update from Sogorea Té Land Trust & Kataly Foundation on March 4, 2024 (via Facebook) <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/2024/03/04/sogorea-te-land-trust-receives-20-million-shuumi-land-tax-contribution-from-kataly-foundation/>

<sup>68</sup> For more about Regan Pritzker, see: <https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/kataly-foundation/>

<sup>69</sup> For more about Democracy Frontlines Fund, see: <https://www.democracyfrontlinesfund.org>

and disrupt traditional philanthropy”. The Democracy Frontlines Fund (DFF) was established in 2020, following the murder of George Floyd. It was also a response to “the national outpouring of grief, rage, and demand for change, the health and economic crisis of COVID-19, and an election year of unparalleled and historic importance”. DFF leads a funder organizing strategy in which they take a dozen funders “on a racial justice learning journey supporting Black-led power building”. In year two of their cohort in 2022, they took a trip to Montgomery, Alabama to visit the Dexter Parsonage Museum, which was the former home of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In that space they reflected together on what kind of leadership is needed at this current moment within the struggle for racial justice.

As part of the funder organizing strategy, Democracy Frontlines Fund has been successful in organizing and moving money by recruiting twelve foundations to pool \$36M in funding over three years to support ten Black-led organizations including: Wend Collective, Tao Rising, Sobrato Philanthropies, Schmidt Family Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, MacArthur Foundation, Kataly Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Crankstart Foundation, and JPB Foundation. This kind of organizing within philanthropy is what will transform its future.

In a March 2024 workshop for our Native Voices Rising Funder Learning Fellowship, Lorraine Ramirez, the executive director of Funders for Justice<sup>70</sup>, reminded us that there are different forms that funder organizing can take: 1) cultural organizing; 2) “world-building” or building new ways and community spaces; 3) leveraging power to create change within existing structures, largely through policymaking. Lorraine described funder organizing as not a linear

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<sup>70</sup> Mission statement for Funders for Justice: <https://fundersforjustice.org/our-vision/>

process but rather a spiral in which political education leads to building deep alignment and building more people into the base, which results in moving money to the movement. She stressed that in order to shift power within the philanthropy sector, we shouldn't be striving for one-time interventions but instead should be seeking pathways to long-term change. It is also critical for people in philanthropy to be sure that they stay accountable to communities by being in community with movement leaders, supporting participatory grantmaking, and building authentic relationships.

### **Limitations of This Research Study**

I would also be remiss in this dissertation if I did not mention the significance of tribal charitable funds and tribally chartered foundations. From the limited data (Tulalip Tribes, 2008) I do have access to, I know that Tulalip Tribes has consistently awarded millions of dollars of its gaming proceeds (as per the state gaming compact and their own generosity) including more than \$2.2 million dollars to more than 200 charitable causes in 2002. Similarly, Washington Tribes collectively awarded \$7.8 million in charitable giving in 2009 (Washington Tribes, 2012). Clearly this data would be more useful if it was more recent and cumulative. However, tribes and tribal foundations are deliberately not as transparent with their giving data as foundations because they do not have to be. Their agreement for financial reporting is with the state and any public sharing of this data is often given as an aggregate rather than broken down so that they are not then subjected to additional scrutiny.

In addition, tribal charitable giving has not been counted within national philanthropic data. Institutional philanthropy tends to criticize tribal giving for lack of transparency in their data, but tribes have not historically been given the same status or invited to institutional

philanthropic spaces. Among tribal giving practitioners, there's a general ill feeling that data around tribal charitable giving might absolve foundations and the government of their responsibilities to provide funding to tribes and Native communities<sup>71</sup>. It is important to note that tribal philanthropy is markedly different because it distributes its revenue out to tribal members and the local economy through scholarships, jobs, infrastructure, services, (and for some tribes) per capita payments. While capitalism claims to benefit the masses, in tribal communities this is actually true.

### **Future Considerations for Study**

One of the areas that I did not have the opportunity to more deeply pursue was the promise of healing justice work within philanthropic spaces. Activists Page and Woodland (2023) describe the importance of “healing justice” within movement spaces as “a call-and-response to our ancestors who survived colonization, slavery, and attempted genocide, healed, and transmitted a radical legacy for collective care and safety” (pg. 1). Reflecting on the years since the pandemic began, they write:

2020 was the beginning of an awakening. We are living in the midst of a growing global resistance to fascism, white supremacy, and all systems of domination and the ways they collude and build upon one another in service of the ruling class. This year brought mass uprisings, unprecedented organizing around electoral politics, and campaigns to defund the police, as well as calls for abolition in ways we have not seen within our lifetime. Our communities have shown up to care for one another in the midst of a global pandemic and extreme economic, political, and social instability. This is truly a moment of contradiction. It was a turning point where the desire for healing justice, even when it is called something different, is increasing. We have to name the ways people heal and transform generations of grief, hate, violence, and the wounds of slavery, colonization, and white supremacist violence in order to fight for our

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<sup>71</sup> This perspective is from my personal notes from a Tribal Grant-making Convening co-hosted by First Nations Development Institute and Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Tribe held in June 2017.

transformative futures. Our people are ready for this healing and this transformation. This fierce longing is clear (Page & Woodland, 2023, pg. 3).

While the concept of healing is threaded throughout this dissertation as being central to the Land Back and reparations movements and in the stories of Native people working in the sector, it is a topic that I haven't had the time or space to fully unpack. In my future work in philanthropy and academia, I plan to spend more time working on my own personal healing and finding ways to contribute to the collective healing of Black and Indigenous communities.

### **Conclusion: Land Back as Re-Worlding**

I believe that world-ending and world-making can occur, are occurring, have always occurred, simultaneously. Given that racial and ecological violence are interwoven and inextricable from one another, more now than ever, Black and Indigenous communities – who are globally positioned as 'first to die' within the climate crisis – are also on the front lines of world-making practices that threaten to overthrow the current (death-making) order of things. Put otherwise, our communities, quite literally the post-apocalyptic survivors of world-endings already, are best positioned to imagine what this may be. This, after all, is the radical promise (if as of yet unachieved) that was and is extended to us by the world-making projects of abolition and decolonization (Maynard & Simpson, 2022, pg. 26).

I hope that the stories within this epilogue help us to imagine that a different world is possible. Instead of being complicit in the historical trajectory of Native people continuing to lose ownership and control over their traditional homelands, we are witnessing what is possible for Native peoples' futures when they get their land back.

As I close this final chapter of my dissertation, I want to recap the journey that we've been on together. In chapter 1, I introduced you to the topic of philanthropy and how existing tensions and disparities within the sector were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I also shared a vision of what might be possible if philanthropy considered moving toward transformative models of giving including supporting the Land Back and reparations

movements. In chapter 2, we learned about the history of philanthropy with a particular emphasis on how the origins of the sector have both intertwined with and diverged from the traditional ways that Native American communities have practiced giving since time immemorial. In chapter 3, I shared how I designed this qualitative study using Indigenous and decolonizing methodological frameworks combined with community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods. I also introduced you to some of the research participants so you could get a sense of the incredible Native and Indigenous people working in the field to make it more equitable. I also explained why we should center the Native values of respect, relationships, responsibility, and reciprocity not just in the ways that we practice philanthropy, but in how we strive to conduct ourselves in research.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 were devoted to sharing my research findings. Chapter 4 sought to answer the question, “What is Native giving?” by sharing my cultural reflections alongside those of my research participants. I argued that: “Giving is more than an act, it’s a way of life for Native people”. Chapter 5 demonstrated how the philanthropy sector is still struggling to understand and implement equity and justice and contrasts that with how Native traditions of giving have always inherently centered equity. Chapter 6 explored the possibilities for allyship and solidarity amid a collective struggle to sustain our commitment to racial justice and decolonization. The chapter also shares some examples of how people and organizations within philanthropy are making a profound difference. This epilogue has shared what is possible when we enact these reparative giving frameworks by sharing a beautiful and personal story of Land Back enacted. As my final words, I want to offer a few of the questions that Teena raised as ones that we should all consider: *Where do I belong? Where do I fit into this story?*

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## Appendix

## Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Tell me about yourself: Who are you and who are your relations?
2. Tell me about your earliest memory of your family giving to other people who were in need.
  - a. What did that look like and how did it make you feel?
  - b. What values did you learn from that example?
3. Does your family or Tribe carry any traditional stories about giving that you would want to (and are culturally and seasonally able to) share?
4. Tell me about the journey that brought you into the field of philanthropy. Is this what you imagined you would be when you grew up?
5. What roles have you played in philanthropy? What types of foundations have you worked for (institutional, social justice, Native or Black-led)?
6. Have you noticed any differences/tensions in the embedded philosophies, values, and policies that reveal the ways that power is structured in these spaces? This might show up in the forms of eligibility criteria, grant making policies, types of funding available, and how accountability is defined.
7. If you could change the ways that philanthropy operates, what would be your top 3-5 priorities to address?
8. How do you think Native philanthropy differs from mainstream or institutional philanthropy? What values is Native philanthropy grounded in?
9. Who do you feel accountable to in this work? What does accountability mean to you?

10. What's the most challenging situation you've had to negotiate or reconcile during your time in the field? What issues in the field do you continuously grapple with?
11. How much do you know about the Land Back movement and other efforts to re-patriate land and/or restore resources to Native communities?
12. How much do you know about the movement for reparations for slavery and unpaid labor and that would benefit Black communities?
13. Do you think that these movements are compatible enough so that Native and Black communities could both benefit from philanthropy making more money available to BIPOC communities?
  - a. What might this solidarity look like?
  - b. What opportunities might this form of solidarity open up? What challenges could you foresee?
14. My research centers on this question: How do we reimagine philanthropy as reparations to Black and Indigenous communities from which the wealth of the United States was built upon at their expense through the theft of Native lands and the exploitation of Black labor? What does this question surface for you?
15. For my final question, I'm going to ask you to use your imagination and consider: What would the future look like for our Native communities if we could truly decolonize and be properly resourced to (re)build our Native nations?
  - a. What does "decolonization" mean to you?
  - b. Do you think that philanthropy can play a role in the process of decolonization?



# NATIVE VOICES RISING

## 10 YEAR IMPACT REPORT

Dana Arviso (Researcher, University of Washington) & Winoka Yepa (Native Americans in Philanthropy)

### FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Looking back at ten years of supporting Native-led change efforts through Native Voices Rising, we have seen much progress and growth. But there is still much more ground to be gained. The initial report in 2013 opens with these words: "Native American organizations face enormous challenges to their communities, their lands and environments, and their basic rights as Indigenous peoples. They face these challenges with limited support from the broad spectrum of America's philanthropic institutions. Far too many foundations simply give little to nothing at all in support of Native causes." While most facts in this statement still ring true in broad strokes (challenges faced, lack of philanthropic support, etc.), the story is ever evolving – as are the storytellers and audience.

This report might strike you as different from others you have read. The report still includes data points focusing on the impact of Native Voices Rising, but there are also direct quotes and stories from those who have directly experienced the power of Native Voices Rising. This follow-up report is an opportunity to tell a grantmaking story rooted in relationship and reciprocity, and centered on Native power-building and visibility. The impact of NVR cannot be understood without acknowledging the work of Louis T. Delgado (Oneida) who led the research for the original report, "A Case for Funding Native-led Change." Our report stands on the shoulders of Louis' life-long work to lay the groundwork for focused funding of Native-led change and the development of Native Voices Rising.

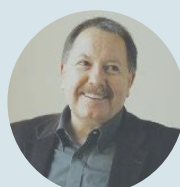
Native Voices Rising (NVR) serves as a mechanism to build broad-based philanthropic support for grassroots groups led by and for Native communities. Since 2013, NVR has moved \$9M to more than 185 Native-led groups fighting for change. It is a partnership between Common Counsel Foundation

This follow-up report is an opportunity to tell a grantmaking story rooted in relationship and reciprocity, and centered on Native power-building and visibility.

and Native Americans in Philanthropy, and its leadership is composed of staff, volunteers, and Advisory Council members, who all identify as Native.

Based on interviews and surveys with grant partners and funding partners, NVR is one of the most effective models for investing in Native communities because it combines Indigenous-led participatory grantmaking with a trust-based approach towards philanthropy. While trust-based philanthropy has become more widespread among funders, it has not necessarily resulted in better giving outcomes for Native communities (i.e. more grant dollars, general operations support, longer grant terms, larger sized grants, etc.). Philanthropy often does not share power, even as it promotes that narrative. Core to NVR's model is having Native communities be making decisions about funding and strategy.

The recommendations put forward in this report are meant to offer an entry-point for philanthropy to better support and build relationships with Native communities and organizations, and create engagement to support Native-led change. As you read the report, we ask you to think about how you envision putting these recommendations into action.



**Carly Hare** (Pawnee/Yankton) and  
**Ron Rowell** (Choctaw/Kaskaskia)  
*Co-Founders of Native Voices Rising*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Fund grassroots Native-led organizations directly whenever possible, and when not possible, fund trusted Native-led intermediaries.
- ◆ Fund multiple, trusted Native-led intermediaries to better support the Native-led ecosystem and increase your organizational learning and relationship building.
- ◆ Provide flexible general operations funding that Native organizations can use towards building their financial sovereignty.
- ◆ Examine your own grantmaking process to be curious which questions or stages might present unwanted barriers for Native-led and non-Native groups.
- ◆ Explore ways to increase your organizational commitment to support Native communities throughout your entire philanthropic strategy, including representation within staff, trustees, grant review process, and DEI goals & outcomes.
- ◆ Deepen your organizational learning by engaging in meaningful efforts to understand how to resource Native-led organizations.
- ◆ Explore how to be in meaningful relationships with trusted Native-led groups beyond just funding relationships.
- ◆ NVR invites foundations and donors to pledge to award at least 10% of their grant dollars to Native-led groups and Native communities.

# INTRODUCTION

*We inherited everything from the three generations before us and we borrow it from the three generations after us. So we have no choice but to make things better than we got them. — Sachem Hawkstorm, NVR Community Reviewer*

After a decade of grantmaking experience, Native Voices Rising (NVR) has demonstrated itself to be a trusted partner to both Native-led organizations and non-Native philanthropic partners. Relationships are at the heart of NVR's approach, and the Fund has compiled an ever-growing track record of being a trusted intermediary. Trust-based philanthropy has become more widespread among funders, but giving outcomes for Native communities have not necessarily followed suit. Trusted grant intermediaries like Native Voices Rising play a critical role in advocating for long-term changes to philanthropic practices, while redistributing funds to trusted Native-led organizations when there is not the ability to support Native communities directly within an institution.

In 2022, NVR celebrated a successful \$10 million dollar campaign that helped lay the foundation for the next phase of NVR's work. This support laid a foundation to extend multi-year funding and invest in meaningful relationships with grant partners while developing NVR's capacity to meet community needs. This report is largely retrospective in its reflections, but by sharing the accomplishments over the past decade and highlights from NVR's collective learning, it also communicates a clear vision for the future.

NVR grant partners know how to identify their community's needs, develop effective program strategy, prioritize allocation of financial resources, and communicate with NVR directly when support is needed. Resulting from a series of strategic conversations in 2021, NVR launched its inaugural Advisory Council, comprised of nine Native leaders with deep experience around philanthropy and grassroots<sup>1</sup> Native nonprofits. Advisory Council members serve as thought partners around NVR's strategy, programming, and organizational development. Around the same time, Native Americans in Philanthropy – one of NVR's two partner organizations, launched the Native Youth Grantmakers to inspire Native youth as the next generation in philanthropy.

NVR is often seen and discussed as a clear demonstration project for what self-determination and centering Native voices can look like in philanthropy. Within the next decade, NVR aims to deepen this role by moving \$10M annually to support Native organizing, advocacy, and power-building efforts throughout the country. Towards this goal, NVR is projecting to have moved a cumulative total of \$12.5M to Native-led change by the end of 2023. NVR's long-term goal is to support the growing ecosystem for both funders and Native-led organizations to advance this movement centering Native organizing and advocacy efforts.

# METHODOLOGY

In October 2022, Common Counsel Foundation staff contracted with lead researcher Dana Arviso (Diné) to gather stakeholder voices, stories of impact, and cumulative grantmaking data to evaluate the impact of 10 years of giving within Native Voices Rising. The purpose was to deepen the understanding of the Fund's unique role within the philanthropic ecosystem and uplift the lessons learned through

1 The term "grassroots" has been defined in the Glossary along with other key terms used in this report.





NVR’s community-led model with the rest of the sector. Like other social justice funders who seek to alleviate the root causes of racial inequity, NVR seeks to support Native American grant partners in making the structural changes needed to support Native people in rebuilding their Tribal Nations.

This research was conducted in three phases: 1) background and grounding; 2) research and data gathering; 3) synthesis and report creation. While the researcher reviewed background materials about NVR – including the 2013 report titled “Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-led Change”<sup>2</sup> – she also brings first-hand experience and context as a previous NVR Community Reviewer and current Advisory Council member. Dana also was a board member for Native Americans in Philanthropy during NVR’s inception and initial years of growth.

During the research phase, Dana conducted 12 virtual one-hour interviews with NVR Community Reviewers, Advisory Council members, grant partners, and Funders.<sup>3</sup> The analysis of the interview transcripts were done by Dana Arviso (Consultant, Common Counsel Foundation) and Winoka Yepa (Data & Research Associate, Native Americans in Philanthropy). During the synthesis phase, Dana worked closely with the NVR Core Team to share initial findings, identify quotes and stories to uplift from the interview data, and summarize potential recommendations to the field. She also presented initial findings and elicited feedback from the NVR Advisory Council as she worked on early drafts. The full listing of interviewees can be found in the appendix to this report.



## ADVANCING INDIGENOUS SOLUTIONS THROUGH NATIVE-CENTERED GRANTMAKING

Native Voices Rising (NVR) is primarily a pooled regranting collaborative that serves as a mechanism to build broad-based philanthropic support for grassroots groups led by and for Native communities. These groups elevate indigenous solutions to historic harms around environmental, racial, and societal injustices. NVR is uniquely positioned to engage and guide non-Native donors and funders into the opportunity to learn about and resource Native-led social change work.<sup>4</sup> Central to NVR is a community-led grantmaking approach with Native community members – termed NVR Community Reviewers – empowered to make grant decisions within regional review committees.

NVR’s grantmaking priorities and model directly reflect the named priorities within the Native nonprofit sector. Across interviews and anecdotally through the years, NVR’s grant partners collectively expressed a continued need for: 1) general operations support; 2) longer-term grant commitments; 3) increased grant sizes; 4) review processes where Native communities are centered and uplifted; and, 5) organizational eligibility that is inclusive of Native-led nonprofits, Tribes, and non-federally recognized Tribes.

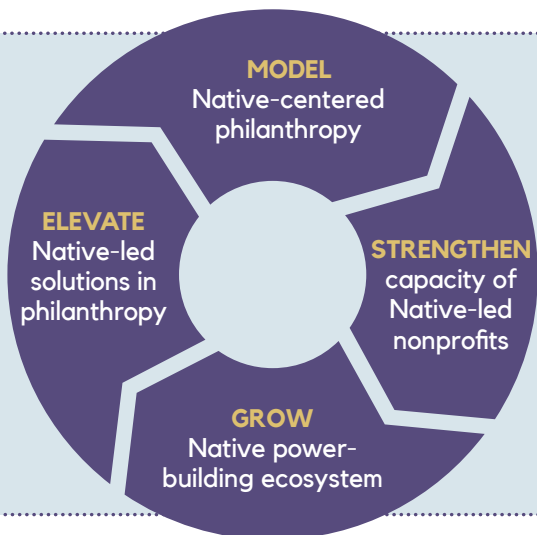
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2 The 2013 report “Native Voices Rising: A Case for Funding Native-Led Change” can be found at: [nativevoicesrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Full-Report-NVR.pdf](https://nativevoicesrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Full-Report-NVR.pdf)

3 A full list of the interview participants can be found in the Appendix.

4 Please see the Glossary at the end of the report for definitions of key terms used throughout the report.

While NVR’s regranting activities remain the primary focus of the Fund, NVR’s model has also evolved. Since 2019, NVR has offered a supportive assistance program for its grant partners – inclusive of webinar offerings and customized consulting support to strengthen the capacity of Native-led nonprofits. This, in conjunction with NVR’s growing funder advocacy and engagement efforts, has elevated the Native power-building ecosystem and heightened Native-led solutions within the philanthropic sector.



## NVR’S GOALS

- ▶ Provide flexible funding to Native-led organizations throughout the country by conducting an annual community-led cycle of grantmaking.
- ▶ Build out a culturally relevant capacity building program for current and past grant partners, including a webinar series and customized consulting support.
- ▶ Catalyze more funding dollars within the philanthropic sector for Native-led social change efforts.

While there are other Native-led foundations and intermediaries that fund regionally, NVR stands out for being a national funder. NVR’s grantmaking has strengthened the capacity of Native-led groups to advance Indigenous solutions by providing flexible general support combined with culturally-relevant supportive assistance to strengthen the work of grant partners.

## SNAPSHOT OF A UNIQUE MODEL FOR NATIVE-LED CHANGE

Let’s begin with the premise that while institutional philanthropy as a sector might be newer to Native communities, Native people have always practiced traditions of giving. Native people are the original philanthropists of the United States and practiced giving since time immemorial. Indigenous traditional practices of redistributing resources amongst communities not only ensured survival, but formed the backbone of Indigenous cultural values and teachings. Native people are still guided by Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, relationships, and responsibility. As Native people, wealth is not measured in possessions but in the spirit of generosity or how much can be given back to the community.

Native Voices Rising is a living example of philanthropy rooted in Indigenous values. Along with other Native-led foundations and intermediary partners, NVR is helping to (re)Indigenize philanthropy and offer lessons to the sector. Native Voices Rising is “a research, donor education, regranting, and capacity-building collaborative created and led by Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy. NVR is designed to support organizing, advocacy and civic engagement in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.” The Fund prioritizes general support for Native grassroots organizations that are building powerful community leadership and advancing change through organizing, advocacy, and power building.

Part of NVR’s strength is an Indigenous<sup>5</sup> and responsive model that recognizes that community organizing and power building looks different in Native communities. As a funder, NVR models a commitment to

5 NVR’s mission statement can be found at: [nativevoicesrising.org/about](https://nativevoicesrising.org/about)



moving away from deficit-based framing centering around poverty, and instead moving towards asset-based narratives and storytelling that includes opportunities to invest in powerful Native-led change.

Another strength of NVR is raising the visibility of “grassroots”<sup>6</sup> Native organizations that are often overlooked by larger foundations. NVR is one of the very few sources of support for kitchen-table community change by and for Native folks. This Fund offers a model of how grassroots grantmaking in Indigenous communities can be accomplished and builds useful practice-based knowledge. NVR is developing a national community of practice that relies on those doing the work at the grassroots and can provide entry for funders who can understand its importance. Stephan Cheney, an NVR Community Reviewer, explained that “Grassroots people are getting things done with a limited amount of resources... our people are accomplishing so much with a very small amount of resources, sometimes their own money. They do this because it is vital to their community’s health. And I would say, that’s what grassroots organizing is for the most part, a willingness to go all in to fight for a better way of life.”

In interviews with grant partners, many spoke about “Indigenizing the system” of philanthropy. What does it mean to Indigenize philanthropy? It means fostering an inclusive organizational culture that allows for a more spiritual and Indigenous ways of knowing. It also requires a commitment to review grant applications from a more cultural perspective that is embedded in Indigenous ways and viewpoints. This should also include incorporating knowledge sharing systems such as alternative forms of storytelling in both the grant proposal, assessment, and evaluation processes.

Sachem Hawkstorm, an NVR Community Reviewer, shared his take on what it means to Indigenize grantmaking:

“And so to have Indigenous [reviewers] who are in touch with our situations, who understand the things that we’re dealing with - and can look at a more spiritual and Indigenous way of looking at things - to be able to help our peoples get the support that they need for the programs that they’re doing. And have an Indigenous perspective with that. I tell people, when we’re in these [reviewer] groups, and when we’re about to do these reviews, remember that we’re not part of that system. And that we can look at things from an Indigenous perspective. And kind of look past some of the things that have held us back in the past, and that we wish that we didn’t have to jump through all the hoops that we had to jump through, you know, in the past. We can say: Where is this organization actually going? What are they doing? And how is it benefiting the community that they’re serving? We can look at that from a unique perspective that most of the philanthropy world can never understand or see, you know, they didn’t come from that.”

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6 Please see the Glossary at the end of the report for definitions of key terms used throughout the report.



# RE-INDIGENIZING PHILANTHROPY: IMPACT OF NATIVE VOICES RISING TO DATE



**1 NVR's community-led grantmaking is humanizing and deeply appreciated by grant partners by exemplifying what it means to do grantmaking "for the people and by the people."** Native-led grassroots organizations feel powerful and recognized within philanthropy, which is not often the case. Knowing that grant decisions were made by Native leaders who are better able to understand their work, groups feel better about NVR's community-led grant process whether they receive a grant or not. NVR's community-led grantmaking model allows for first-hand community expertise to inform the grantmaking process and helps mitigate any potential power dynamics or possible favoritism in the grant review process. Native community reviewers better understand the nature of the work of grant partners and the challenges and opportunities that they might encounter. This participatory grantmaking model also requires that funders give up the majority of the decision-making power by yielding to the recommendations of the review committee instead of maintaining control of such decisions at the staff or trustee level.



**2 NVR's model of community-led grantmaking is also empowering for NVR's Community Reviewers, and is a demonstration of the sovereignty NVR is moving towards.** This is different from traditional philanthropy where Native communities are often not in decision-making positions. NVR Community Reviewers are recruited from a pool of national Native leaders within the nonprofit & philanthropic sectors. NVR honors the time and community expertise of grant reviewers by providing them with an honorarium. As a part of the onboarding and training, NVR offers its Community Reviewers knowledge, criteria, and other considerations that they will need to meaningfully review grants. NVR Community Reviewers gain deeper insight into the array of ways Indigenous communities across the nation are telling the stories of their organizing and their vision for change. Community Reviewers operate by consensus-based decision making and make time to hear both the strengths and concerns from other reviewers about the proposals. NVR also operates from a deep sense of relational responsibility towards community similar to how relatives help take care of one another. The Fund engages a great number of Indigenous community members from differing generations and levels of experience, including Native Americans in Philanthropy's Youth Grantmakers. In this way, Native voices are not just amplified at the grant partner level, but also within the grant review process.


United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) staff member LorenAshley Buford shared her experience as a Community Reviewer:



"What I think is so beautiful about the community review process is that we understand the traditional core values of the tribal communities that lie behind the proposed projects. This amplifies the community impact when you have a group of peers who are embedded in Indian Country and have lived experiences in the challenges these grant partners are addressing. So it's quality over quantity sometimes. And understanding the importance of the work based on the knowledge that Indigenous people carry with them that cannot always be translated into a five-page report, especially when you have word count limits and things like that. It goes beyond a grading scale. It really comes down to the understanding of knowing Indigenous worldviews and knowing how their land, culture, or language preservation efforts are tied to their survival and identity."



**3 NVR demonstrates trust in the expertise of its grant partners by offering general support grants.** Combined with general operating support and the intention for longer-term funding, grant partners feel a real difference in the funding support that they receive as it allows them to better focus on their community work. Susan Gordon from Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) shared her appreciation for how NVR grants are administered:



“The number one issue is general support grants. And, making reporting easy. I’ve been fundraising for nonprofits for 30 years. And I mean, I have seen it all. I really have. And, so grant making has become easier. I think community people see the benefits of general support grants. And compared to the [norm] of philanthropy, where mainstream foundations have moved into this sort of business model where they’re making an investment, and they want to know what their outcome is at the end of their grant. And that’s not how community based organizing works. In the issues that I’ve worked on, which are nuclear weapons issues, and now uranium issues, we’re not going to solve this next year, we’re not going to solve this in 10 years. And so understanding that your last grant to us, which was a commitment of \$30,000 a year for three years. That’s amazing. That is just a phenomenal gift to this organization. Because it shows your confidence in us and what we’re doing, and allows us to know that for the next three years, we have this, this support.”

NVR partners, consultants, Community Reviewers, and the Advisory Council strive to understand the difference between transactional versus transformational relationships and to model being in good relations with one another both in interactions with one another and in “doing business” with each other. NVR takes the stance that its grant partners are experts in their own communities and contexts instead of assuming knowledge about what is best for a Native-led organization. Ron Rowell, former CEO of Common Counsel Foundation and current NVR Advisory Council member, shared why Native Voices Rising was committed to offering general support funding from its onset: “Organizations need the flexibility to decide for themselves how they’re going to use funds to achieve their goals. Having funders assert power over these day-to-day management decisions makes absolutely no sense and undermines organizational effectiveness.”

NVR continues to learn and adapt around how it can be more responsive to the needs that Native communities are facing. One NVR Community Reviewer, Marcus Briggs-Cloud, shared his experience with receiving grants for his group, Ekvñ-Yefolecv: “It’s really helpful when entities fund general operating support, no restrictions. Many communities need to apply funds to capital campaigns, like land acquisition, or the purchase of vehicles or building construction costs. We know how to manifest the visions we are carrying, but we need the financial support to do so. So, unrestricted funds, general operating support, is so important.”


NVR supports its grant partners in developing stronger voices for Native solutions, identifying ways of organizing, and naming the changes needed for Indigenous futures. This is a demonstration of what is needed for Native people – employing concepts of self-determination and sovereignty – and resistance against the “white savior” narrative or poverty-based charity model.

4

**NVR offers a critically nimble funding vehicle that can adapt and evolve its understanding of community organizing and power building as shifts occur within Indigenous communities. It is known that community organizing and power building**

looks different in Native communities than in other communities, and NVR’s model allows for organizing efforts to be better acknowledged on the ground. This is often not the case in traditional philanthropy, which often lags behind efforts in communities.

Janeen Comenote, Executive Director of the National Urban Indian Family Coalition, shared how organizing in Native communities is distinct and often a form of “reactive organizing”. It is also tied to the history of the American Indian Urban Relocation Era,<sup>7</sup> when Native people moved off of rural reservations into urban centers for the promise of education and employment. Once they arrived, the opportunities were limited and families found themselves without their extended family and community as a social safety net.



“Organizing an Indian country doesn’t follow what classic organizing looks like in other communities of color... I think urban Native communities have a pretty rich history of organizing... We have been organizing as communities, since we got to cities. That’s how urban Indian organizations came to be, they usually came to be as a result of a group of dedicated citizens organizing to meet the needs of our people in cities, and then they just grew as they began responding to the needs on the ground, and then became organizations.”

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7 For more information about American Indian Urban Relocation Era, see: [www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/indian-relocation.html)

Judith Le Blanc from Native Organizers Alliance also shared her national perspective on what contemporary Native organizing and advocacy work look like in relation to both national and state politics and policy work:



“That’s why this is one of these magic movement moments where funders have to understand the need to invest in power building... We are not like other communities of color, because we were sovereign people. 70% of us live in cities. But as a voting constituency, we have a lot of power in key states. We have a lot of power when it comes to determining state elections. And in order to have policies that shift in the direction of: 1) climate change, which is a top concern based on an Indigenous Futures<sup>8</sup> survey that we did this year; 2) access to health care; 3) dealing with the impact of systemic racism across Indian country. Those are the top three concerns that motivated people to vote. And just like the other electorate, other, you know, constituencies, they had the similar concerns and moved by issues. So I think philanthropy has to look at power building from the angles that when voter engagement and voter protection work is done, it gives them the funders an understanding of the balance of power. It gives them the understanding of what Indian Country is concerned about.”

**5**

**NVR grant partners also benefit from the impact of the Supportive Assistance Program.**

NVR builds the capacity of Native community members to better understand the world of philanthropy. NVR offers Supportive Assistance programming to help grant partners build up their internal capacity through a webinar series and customized consulting support. This offering is annually revised and adapted to support Native-led groups to become more effective in achieving their mission and goals. Over the past 4 years, NVR’s Supportive Assistance Program has offered webinar trainings on topics like grant writing, relationship building, fundraising from both foundations and individual donors, strategic planning for organizational growth, storytelling, understanding financial reporting, and developing a communications strategy. These webinar topics continue to evolve over time to meet the expressed needs and interests of NVR grant partners, and participants have the opportunity to engage in small learning pods following webinar offerings to dive deeper into the topics discussed in the webinars.

The second phase is customized consulting time with Native consultants. NVR grant partners identify discrete capacity building projects with 10-20 hours of consultant support, and NVR partners them with Native consultants and coaches who have appropriate skill sets. The Supportive Assistance Program not only strengthens the ability of grant partners to be competitive for grants beyond NVR, but it also helps them strengthen their organization’s work. This is just one of the ways that NVR strategically provides Indigenous groups with information about how to become part of the “by and for Natives” philosophy.

While participation has fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic years, grant partners have expressed appreciation not only for the content of the webinar trainings, but the opportunity to learn from one another in learning pods. This cooperative learning also expands their network to include other Native organizations who are facing similar challenges in building up strong and sustainable nonprofits. Grant partner Ahtza Chavez from Naeva shared her experience with participating in the Supportive Assistance Program: “I think it was really helpful. It’s just like a circle of family that, you know, you get used to being able to organize with more people.

More brains or you know, better than just your own.”

LorenAshley Buford also shared her experience as a grant partner at UNITY: “Quantifiably measuring success is very much a western idea of philanthropy. I think what Native Voices Rising does to address that is offer wrap-

around services. The program offers networking, provides training, feedback on your grant writing, and an opportunity for capacity building to build up your organization so that you can thrive in the areas of community impact. So that is completely different from a lot of the other funding resources because it goes beyond deliverables and nurtures the indigenous organizations while also supporting them financially.”

**SUPPORTIVE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Cycle	No. Webinars	No. Total Webinar Participant	No. Groups supported with customized consulting time	No. Native consultants engaged (webinars + projects)
Spring/Fall 2019	4	300	5	17
Spring/Fall 2020	4	233	5	13
Spring/Fall 2021	4	226	8	14
Spring/Fall 2022	3	209	14	13

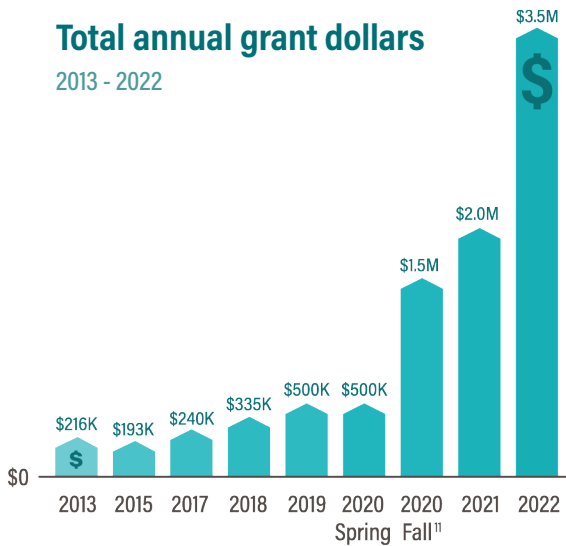
8 For more information and the results of the Indigenous Futures survey, please see: [indigenousfutures.org/#about](https://indigenousfutures.org/#about)

# NATIVE VOICES RISING'S

## GRANTMAKING BY THE NUMBERS<sup>9</sup>

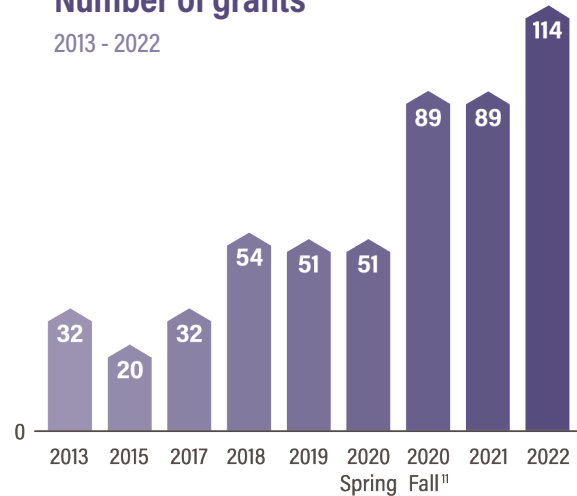
### Total annual grant dollars

2013 - 2022



### Number of grants

2013 - 2022



### States with grant partner representation

2013 - 2022



States with at least one grant partner:

32 states + DC

Top 5 states with most grant partners:

CA (31), HI (19), MN (16), SD (15), WA (15)

<sup>9</sup> While the Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy Funding Map may have outdated or inaccurate data that excludes grassroots Native American organizations as grant partners, we encourage funders to become familiar with the mapping tool and ensure that your foundation's data submitted to Candid is accurate for future versions: [nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map](https://nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map)

While the inspirational stories of NVR’s grant partners help to understand how the funding dollars are making a difference, success and growth over the past decade is also measured by the increases in the number of grants, average grant size, and total grant dollars awarded per year.

- ▶ **Numbers of Cycles: 9**
- ▶ **Total number of unique grants: 531**
- ▶ **Cumulative total in grants: \$9,000,000**
- ▶ **Unique grant partners: 190 (as of end of 2022)**
- ▶ **Community reviewers: 61 (as of end of 2022)**

## GRANTS

Cycle	No. Grants	Avg. Grant	Total Grants
2013	32	\$6,763	\$216,400
2015 <sup>10</sup>	20	\$9,678	\$193,561
2017	32	\$7,500	\$240,000
2018	54	\$6,204	\$335,000
2019	51	\$9,804	\$500,000
2020 - Spring	51	\$9,804	\$500,000
2020 - Fall <sup>11</sup>	89	\$16,853	\$1,500,000
2021	89	\$22,472	\$2,000,000
2022	114	\$30,702	\$3,500,000

10 NVR conducted grant cycles every other year 2013-2017, as fundraising was a major barrier until 2018, when grant cycles occurred annually.

11 NVR offered two grant cycles in 2020 in response to the urgent needs that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. NVR also renewed some grants without an additional application process as a means of moving resources quickly.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD: HOW PHILANTHROPY CAN SUPPORT NATIVE POWER-BUILDING EFFORTS



**Fund grassroots Native-led organizations directly whenever possible, and when not possible, fund trusted Native-led intermediaries.** The need for funding grassroots Native-led organizations is still critical. NVR offers philanthropies a means of reaching those small, grassroots efforts that most feel they cannot do on their own. Over the past decade, NVR has built a compendium of grant partners that is meant to serve as a starting point to find Native-led groups. As a national funding opportunity, NVR also connects regions throughout Indian Country, celebrates the diversity, and helps equitable distribution of support. And the "ripple effect" of changes across the country is beginning to be seen.



**Fund multiple, trusted Native-led intermediaries to better support the Native-led ecosystem and increase your organizational learning and relationship building.** Along with other Indigenous-led funders, accountable intermediaries are changing the narrative and increasing the sector's understanding of the reality of what it means to fight against the root causes of the complex problems communities are working to solve. Philanthropies also need to understand that the funding disparity is rooted in settler colonial history and modern policies of white supremacy. Overcoming that painful legacy will take significant time and investment.

In solidarity with its partners across the field, NVR cannot be the sole Native-led intermediary that you support. Other Native-led foundations and intermediaries are supporting critical work across Native communities, including but not limited to: American Indian College Fund, CIRI Foundation, Decolonizing Wealth Project, First Peoples Fund, First Nations Development Institute, Hawaii People's Fund, Hopi Foundation, IllumiNative, Na'ah Illahee Fund, Native Arts & Cultures Foundation, Native Forward, Native Organizers Alliance, Native Ways Federation, NDN Collective, Potlatch Fund, Return to the Heart Foundation, Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, and Tiwahe Foundation – to name a few.



**Provide flexible general operations funding that Native organizations can use towards building their financial sovereignty.** General operating funding demonstrates trust that groups know how best to support and resource their work. This could include providing grant partners the opportunity to use general operations funding to contribute to their endowment. NVR grant partner Naeva's Executive Director Ahtza Chavez encourages funders to move in this direction:

"They really just need to entrust Native communities to really help build our own endowments. So that we can do that on our own, they need to be able to step aside and not have to have ownership of where it goes. And allow us to reinvest it, [and] do what we need to [do]. I think a lot of times organizations get money and then they're like: we need to spend it, we need to spend it, that's the you know, grantors want us want to see us spend every single dime. What would be more advantageous for a lot of these communities is for them to say hey, keep 5% to 10% of those funds and use that to safeguard you as an organization for future years."



**Examine your own grantmaking process by questioning which stages might present unwanted barriers for Native-led and non-Native groups.** Along with other funders, NVR aims to simplify both the grant writing and grant reporting processes for Native-led organizations who are seeking support. NVR invites other funders to learn more about its grantmaking model and consider how you might integrate some aspects of it into your own grant review process. It is a responsive, reflective, and reactive model which other funders can replicate with some support. Advisory Council members and CCF staff work together to do outreach to other funders who may have an interest in this model and help answer your questions.

NVR encourages you to examine your own process and determine if all aspects are really necessary and

where you can offer a simplified and flexible approach to increase access to prospective grant partners. Helena Jacobs, NVR Community Reviewer and staff member to grant partner Alaska Native Birthworkers Community, offered some appreciation for how NVR has been one of the easiest to work with:

"NVR keeps it simple - pretty straightforward proposal. Reporting was waived during the pandemic and reports for other grantors were accepted. [NVR offers] high quality capacity building webinars, growing inclusive community of Native leaders as reviewers and advisors, [and] doesn't require a PhD in grant writing to get a proposal awarded. It really centers grassroots leadership and first-time grants writers, my favorite proposal that got the highest award in our review group this year was the proposal that written in the way you would have a conversation with an Auntie - very down to earth, real, relatable, funny and reminded us of a lot of commonalities we have as Native peoples."



**Explore ways to increase your organizational commitment to support Native communities throughout your entire philanthropic strategy, including representation within staff, trustees, grant review process, and DEI goals & outcomes.**

According to CHANGE Philanthropy's 2020 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals data, only "3.8 percent of people working in philanthropy identify either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with some other race or ethnicity. Of those respondents, 0.8 percent identified solely as Indigenous." Native Americans in Philanthropy has further unpacked this data in their 2022 Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report<sup>12</sup> to understand this data by age, gender identity, foundation type, workforce size, and region.

Along with other Native-led foundations, institutional funders are encouraged to invest in building up their internal capacity to foster strong and trusting relationships by explicitly including Native Americans as a population group within your organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals. There is a dire need for more Native representation at all levels within philanthropic organizations – including particularly at the program officer, senior leadership, and trustee levels – in order to better understand and address how Native communities have been impacted by colonization and to build stronger relationships. Commit to advancing equity in philanthropy by creating a current baseline of your Native American staff and trustees and then set goals and strategies for how to increase this representation within your foundation.

While advancing DEI goals within your foundation, it is important to ensure that national grantmaking data is capturing Native American giving data and trends accurately. Giving statistics get easily conflated, often seen through double-counting of self-reported regional and national data and failing to distinguish between Native-led organizations over organizations that serve Native Americans as part of their larger mission. This data integrity is important to provide an accurate baseline from which to measure change.

The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors.



**Deepen your organizational learning by engaging in meaningful efforts to understand how to resource Native-led organizations.**

NVR has evolved as a demonstration project for funders to build trust in Native communities and learn about how best to support Native communities with funding dollars. The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors. However, there are still opportunities for funders and donors to deepen their organizational learning and commitment to Native communities with continued learning and inquiry in support of grassroots community organizing, advocacy, and systemic change work.

Towards this end, NVR will be recruiting and piloting a Funder Learning Circle in the near future for institutional funders looking to deepen their support for Native-led work and change efforts. This program

<sup>12</sup> To access NAP's Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report see: [jppreport.nativephilanthropy.org](http://jppreport.nativephilanthropy.org)  
Please note that an updated version will be released in 2023.

will help build tangible skills to support Native-led work within philanthropic institutions, gain better understanding about the work happening across Native communities, and promote peer learning with other funders who want to deepen their support and learning around Native communities. Please email [nvr@commoncounsel.org](mailto:nvr@commoncounsel.org) to learn more about this.



**Explore how to be in meaningful relationships with trusted Native-led groups beyond just funding relationships.** Beyond grant dollars, interviewees revealed that funders can also provide support to Native grant partners by employing the following strategies:

- Open doors and “tell your friends” (other funders and individual donors) about the work to help us gain more financial support.
- Provide opportunities to promote the story of the work on the foundation’s social media pages.
- Use Tribally-owned or Native-owned businesses, vendors, consultants, artists, and caterers, whenever possible.
- Convene grant partners to help build relationships and expand networks, assist with capacity building, and still provide time and space for opportunities for rest, healing, and wellness.
- Invest in research and data practices led by Indigenous people and dig into the existing data and reports that are referenced throughout this report.
- When possible, support Native organizations in building endowments as a form of gaining financial sovereignty.



**Finally, NVR invites foundations and donors to pledge at least 10% of their grant dollars to Native-led groups and Native communities.** While this is a bold demonstration of abundant support for Native communities, there are other ways to engage along this spectrum of support for Native peoples. For a foundation or donor, it could look like pledging to give 10% more than your last year based on grant data, increasing your giving to 10% to Native communities within a 5-year time period, or something else that meaningfully supports Native communities with funding dollars. Philanthropic support of Native communities has stayed stagnant at less than half of a percent of philanthropic dollars, and it requires accountability and collectivity to reimagine what real support of Native-led work can look like.

Similar to our recommendation on how to increase Native representation within your foundation, NVR suggests that you start by examining your giving history, make sure the data is accurate, and then create a current baseline of your grants to Native-led organizations. From there, you can set goals and strategies for how to increase these grants within your foundation. If you need assistance, NVR staff are willing to help.

The past decade of work has created a strong track record of NVR being a trusted intermediary that can bridge relationships and learnings with Native-led groups and non-Native funders and donors.



## JOIN US IN ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF NVR

NVR envisions a future of abundance for Native communities. This is a future where everyone can bear witness to Native people rebuilding Native nations, the return of ancestral land and natural resources to effective Native stewards, and the rebalancing of the relationship with the environment and natural world. NVR also envisions a future where communities can thrive and be free, where wealth and resources have been redistributed in equitable ways.

At this particular moment, Indigenous people around the world are urgently fighting for justice amid racial inequities, economic inequality, and the disproportionate impacts of climate change. Simone Senogles, of NVR grant partner Indigenous Environmental Network, shared what this moment means:

"We've seen a lot of shifts in what organizing looks like on the ground and what the relationships with funders looks like. I think that those two things have shifted a lot and gone up and down. After Standing Rock, it's like everyone got interested in our kind of work. The kind of work that we've been doing quietly on the sidelines [and feeling] marginalized forever. Not just our organization, but Indigenous peoples. Even environmental justice is really a continuation of a fight against colonization and imperialism - and you know - all the land grabs and all the threats to our livelihood on our homelands. And it's never been popular - how could it be? How could Indigenous peoples fighting for our lands ever be a popular thing in a capitalist society that is based upon our sort of disenfranchisement, right? All the wealth that has been built is largely built upon Indigenous lands and the injustice is what we face. So when we fight for that, it's not always something that funders want to face or want to fund. So I think that there's a lot more understanding on the funder side about the value of Indigenous organizing. Just because it's been shown to be so powerful because we're so committed, and we're so based in our own values - and you know - we're fighting for our lives. And it just means everything, this is our homeland. And so when we're fighting against climate change, for environmental justice, and for clean water, at a time when the world is at a tipping point."

Judith LeBlanc from Native Organizers Alliance also voiced the urgency of this moment:

"Since I got involved with NVR - 8 years ago - the organizing context has changed so much. There is a really heightened awareness at the grassroots level of what our political power has the capacity to do. Because when you have clearly stopped the Keystone XL Pipeline, stopped drilling in the Arctic, and Standing Rock - well, we didn't stop that pipeline. But we built a level of awareness that interrupted the dominant narrative. And people got a sense of the power of what that does when you interrupt the narrative... If there's anything this report says, I think there needs to be a note of urgency, we have two years where we potentially can get some structural chips made in the way that governance handles the problems and concerns of Indian Country. And if they don't invest, then it's going to limit our ability to get as far as we can, under this administration."

### CONTACT US

LEARN MORE by visiting our website at: [nativevoicesrising.org/invest](https://nativevoicesrising.org/invest)  
Email us at: [nvr@commoncounsel.org](mailto:nvr@commoncounsel.org)

## REFERENCES

Candid & Native Americans in Philanthropy. (2023). *Investing in Native Communities: A Joint Project of Native Americans in Philanthropy & Candid*. Funding Map available at [nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map](https://nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map)

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## APPENDIX

### THANK YOU TO OUR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

NVR thanks the Interview Participants including NVR Community Reviewers, Advisory Council members, Grant partners, and Funders for sharing their perspectives for this report:

- Susan Gordon (Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment)
- Simone Senogles (Indigenous Environmental Network)
- Carly Bad Heart Bull (Native Ways Federation & Native Americans in Philanthropy Board Member)
- Janeen Comenote (National Urban Indian Family Coalition)
- Ahtza Chavez (Naeva, formerly NAVA Education Project)
- Judith LeBlanc (Native Organizers Alliance)
- Helena Jacobs (Alaska Native Birthworkers Community)
- Ron Rowell (NVR Advisory Council & Screener)
- Stephen Cheney (Neighborhood Funders Group & Screener)
- LorenAshley Buford (UNITY & Community Reviewer)
- Sachem Hawkstorm (Community Reviewer)
- Marcus Briggs-Cloud (Ekvn-Yefolecv Maskoke Ecovillage & Community Reviewer)

### APPRECIATION TO NVR'S PARTNERS

NVR is deeply appreciative of the trusted relationships that they have built with their grant partners. While funders measure the impact of their collective giving, the impact that all of its grant partners have within the Native and Tribal communities that they serve is immeasurable. For a full listing of grant partners, please visit [nativevoicesrising.org](https://nativevoicesrising.org).

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Financial Sovereignty

- “To provide and support opportunities that enact respectful and culturally appropriate policies and programming to facilitate tribes’ economic development efforts, increase investments, and bolster Native communities’ financial well-being into the future.” Source: [nonprofitquarterly.org/no-one-is-coming-to-save-us-forging-paths-to-native-financial-sovereignty/](https://nonprofitquarterly.org/no-one-is-coming-to-save-us-forging-paths-to-native-financial-sovereignty/)
- Native Financial Sovereignty is a movement led by Native Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) that “acknowledges that nothing will change for Native communities without Native families having access to homeownership and Native small businesses having access to capital.” Therefore these CDFIs help others “navigate the bureaucratic systems steeped in inequities that continue to sideline—and redline—Native communities.” Source: [www.nicoa.org/the-native-financial-sovereignty-movement](https://www.nicoa.org/the-native-financial-sovereignty-movement)

### General Operating Support

“General operating support is a grant in support of a nonprofit organization’s mission rather than specific projects or programs. General operating support is the working capital nonprofits need to sustain their day-to-day operations.” Source: GEO Funders; [www.geofunders.org/resources/what-is-general-operating-support-and-why-is-it-important-678](https://www.geofunders.org/resources/what-is-general-operating-support-and-why-is-it-important-678)

### Grassroots

NVR defines grassroots organizations as those that are rooted and invested in, have deep relationships to, are led by, and are accountable to the communities in which they work. Grassroots can mean both small, volunteer groups and large groups with paid staff, but are distinct from grassroots groups who differ in levels of relationships, governance, and accountability.

### Indigenous

The original inhabitants of a geographic location. It is often used as an umbrella term for Native peoples no matter where they originate from. Also, when referring to Indigenous peoples, be sure to capitalize the word. Source: Native Americans in Philanthropy: [nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else](https://nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else)

### Native American

A term that refers to American Indians and Alaska Natives and usually excludes Native Hawaiians. This term is also often a broader reference to people from tribes that are not federally-recognized. Source: Native Americans in Philanthropy: [nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else](https://nativephilanthropy.org/2020/11/24/indigenous-identity-more-than-something-else)

### Native-led

Organizations, groups, or affiliations that are based in and serving a Native community or population and whose leadership is composed of a majority Native community who represent and are accountable to their communities. The primary focus of NVR’s work is American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.

### Participatory grantmaking

Participatory grantmaking cedes decision-making power about funding - including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions - to the very communities that funders aim to serve. (from Deciding Together).

### Power building & organizing

Collectively, we define power building as knowing our inherent collective strength, honoring Indigenous values, and understanding and respecting our respective roles (i.e., tribal leaders, youth leaders, matriarchs, medicine keepers, culture keepers). We also understand we are accountable to our role, and to community. Source: Native Organizers Alliance: [nativeorganizing.org/our-work/power-building](https://nativeorganizing.org/our-work/power-building)



# Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report

Spring 2024



# Letter from Senior Vice President of Programs, Brittany Schulman

Dear Friends,

Native Americans in Philanthropy was founded on the principle of inclusion. Ensuring the presence of Indigenous individuals in the field is of utmost importance, as it brings a unique perspective to the goals and objectives of philanthropy. Understanding the representation of Indigenous Peoples in the sector, both in terms of quantity and proportion, is crucial. However, we acknowledge that numbers alone cannot convey the complete narrative. Throughout this report, you will directly hear from Indigenous philanthropic professionals who share their personal experiences. Each quote emphasizes the disparities, challenges, resilience, and uniqueness of Indigenous experience. Our intention is that through reading this report, individuals can reflect on their own paths as well as how these institutions can support Indigenous philanthropic professionals, and really understand the value each individual brings.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who shared their stories and allowed us to include their voices in this report. We would also like to express our deep appreciation to Dana Arviso for contributing her forthcoming dissertation research, which continues to shed light on Indigenous experiences.

This report is not meant to be merely shelved, but rather serves as an opportunity to confront systemic issues within the sector. As you delve into this report, we urge you to integrate the recommendations into your organizations. If Native Americans in Philanthropy can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out. We eagerly await your reactions and feedback, as we continue to expand our research and reports, working towards a sector that is truly diverse and inclusive.

Thank you,

**Brittany Schulman (Waccamaw Siouan)**  
Senior Vice President of Programs  
Native Americans in Philanthropy

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## Introduction

On average, large U.S. foundations allocate only 0.4% of their philanthropic funding to Native communities. It is important to note that American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people comprise approximately 2% of the U.S. population. This stark contrast in philanthropic funding allocation is concerning as it perpetuates the underrepresentation of Native communities in the philanthropic sector. The lack of Native representation in decision-making processes and the limited financial support hinder the progress and development of these communities, highlighting the urgent need for more equitable distribution of resources and inclusion in the philanthropic sector.

CHANGE Philanthropy (CHANGE) recently released the third Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals (DAPP) Report. As a CHANGE partner, Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) is excited to share the second Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals (IPP) report as a supplement to CHANGE Philanthropy's DAPP report with particular emphasis on Indigenous professionals in the sector. New to this report is a small selection of quotes and stories from Indigenous philanthropic professionals that share their experiences, calls to action, and need for organizational change within the field. We worked closely with University of Washington doctoral candidate and Senior Program Strategist for Native Voices Rising, Dana Arviso (Diné), whose dissertation "Reclaiming Philanthropy & Re-centering Native Giving in Respect, Reciprocity, Relationships, and Communal Responsibility" centers "traditional practices within Native American communities and examine that in contrast to what modern philanthropy has become" (Arviso, 2023).

As stated by CHANGE, the DAPP report "aims to help the philanthropic community better understand its workforce and leadership." The 2022 DAPP Report features demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc., as well as an Identity Index, which offers "insight into working perceptions of how their identities are received by their employers across various identity components." According to CHANGE, the DAPP report "offers one of the most comprehensive assessments of diversity in philanthropy, and provides a basis for considerations of the success of equity and inclusion efforts."

According to the 2022 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals Report, the survey received responses from 2,199 individuals from 77 foundations. This represents an 8% decrease in participants compared to the 2020 DAPP Survey. Out of the respondents, **42.3%** identified as people of color, which amounts to 943 individuals. Additionally, **3.4%** of people in philanthropy identified as Indigenous, either solely or in combination with another racial or ethnic identity. Solely Indigenous respondents accounted for approximately **0.9%** of the total. Comparing this to the 2020 DAPP Survey, the report shows a slight increase of 0.1% in the number of solely Indigenous individuals. The cause of this slight increase is unknown, but the report states that the percentages of responses from people of color remained mostly consistent, with only a slight 8% decrease in the overall number of survey respondents for the 2022 DAPP Survey.

Regardless, the new findings provide our community knowledge of the percentage of Indigenous professionals in philanthropy who identify with intersectional race or ethnic backgrounds.

Please visit CHANGE Philanthropy's website to download and read the 2022 DAPP Report:  
<https://changephilanthropy.org/dapp/>

## **“Reclaiming Philanthropy & Re-centering Native Giving in Respect, Reciprocity, Relationships, and Communal Responsibility”: Dissertation Study by Dana Arviso**

This Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report uses quotes from the dissertation “Reclaiming Philanthropy and Re-centering Native Giving in Respect, Reciprocity, Relationships, and Communal Responsibility,” a study by University of Washington Doctoral Candidate and Senior Program Strategist for Native Voices Rising, **Dana Arviso (Diné)**, The dissertation highlights the following key themes:

- The embedded philosophies, values, and ways in which power operates through their structures in the forms of eligibility criteria, grant making policies, types of funding available, and how accountability is defined.
- To retrace and reclaim those traditional practices within Native American communities and examine that in contrast to what modern philanthropy has become.



The quotes from the dissertation are used in this report to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Indigenous peoples in the philanthropic sector. The quotes also help to give voice to Indigenous perspectives and to challenge the dominant paradigms of philanthropy.

Specific quotes can be found under the sub-heading “Quotes From the Field” which accompanies each category of this report and adds context to the quantitative aspects of this report. A detailed description of the dissertation can be found below.

## Dissertation Abstract from Dana Arviso

My research grounds itself in providing a brief history of the fields of institutional philanthropy and Native philanthropy as a means of providing some context for why this area of study is important and to understand the limitations of different types of funding. In tracing the divergent histories of these major areas of philanthropy, I hope to reveal the embedded philosophies, values, and ways in which power operates through their structures in the forms of eligibility criteria, grant making policies, types of funding available, and how accountability is defined. In order to support the critical work that Native communities are undertaking in their cultural resurgence efforts, we need to build a better understanding of the ecosystem of funding.

I will also make the case that most of the work needs to be done within the philanthropic sector to radically change its core beliefs and practices to make more money available to Black and Indigenous communities as forms of reparations and restorative justice. This alone is justification for dramatically increasing the amount of funding that goes towards supporting Native communities from less than .5% to an amount that is a just and proportional to our surviving percentage of the population.

Finally, part of my research is to retrace and reclaim those traditional practices within Native American communities and examine that in contrast to what modern philanthropy has become. What can we learn by re-centering traditional practices of philanthropy? Ultimately, the question that drives my dissertation is: How do we reimagine philanthropy as reparations to Black and Indigenous communities from which the wealth of the United States was built upon at their expense through the theft of Native lands and the exploitation of Black labor?

# Indigenous People in Philanthropy, by Racial and Ethnic Identity

The 2022 DAPP Survey garnered roughly 2,199 responses from individuals associated with 77 foundations. The survey found that 42.3% of the respondents identified as people of color. Within that percentage, 3.4% of respondents identified solely as Indigenous or Indigenous in conjunction with another racial or ethnic identity. Of that 3.4%, 0.9% identified solely as Indigenous. There has been fluctuation in the percentage of respondents identifying solely as Indigenous in previous studies, ranging from 0.8% in 2020 to 1.6% in 2018.

## Percentage of Respondents Who Identify as Indigenous



**Note:** Approximately 10.6% of the respondents identify as more than one race or ethnicity, which may be considered a margin of error as respondents who identify as Indigenous in addition to one or more other races/ethnicities may fall under this category.

## Quotes From the Field

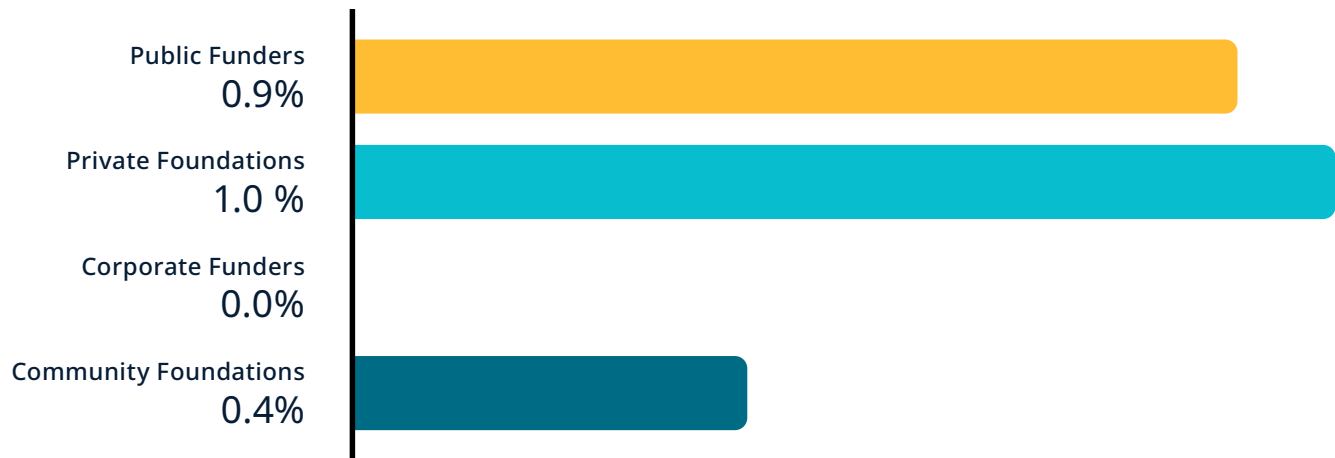
“It was often difficult and lonely to be the only Native on staff for many years. In spite of the fact that I recommended a number of Native individuals as potential board members, staff members, and consultants, and encouraged colleagues to support Native initiatives or visit Native communities, there was limited success. One of the greatest challenges is the expectation that you are a Native expert, that you know everything there is to know about every Native issue, and that you have all these connections where you can easily access information immediately. Fortunately, I was able to strengthen a national Native network of support that helped immensely. Still, it was often stressful to deal with those expectations.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All identifiers of interviewees remain confidential to protect the identity of the participants.

# Indigenous People in Philanthropy, by Foundation Type

Indigenous People in Philanthropy who identified solely as Indigenous were more likely to be represented among private foundations.

## Race and Ethnicity, by Foundation Type



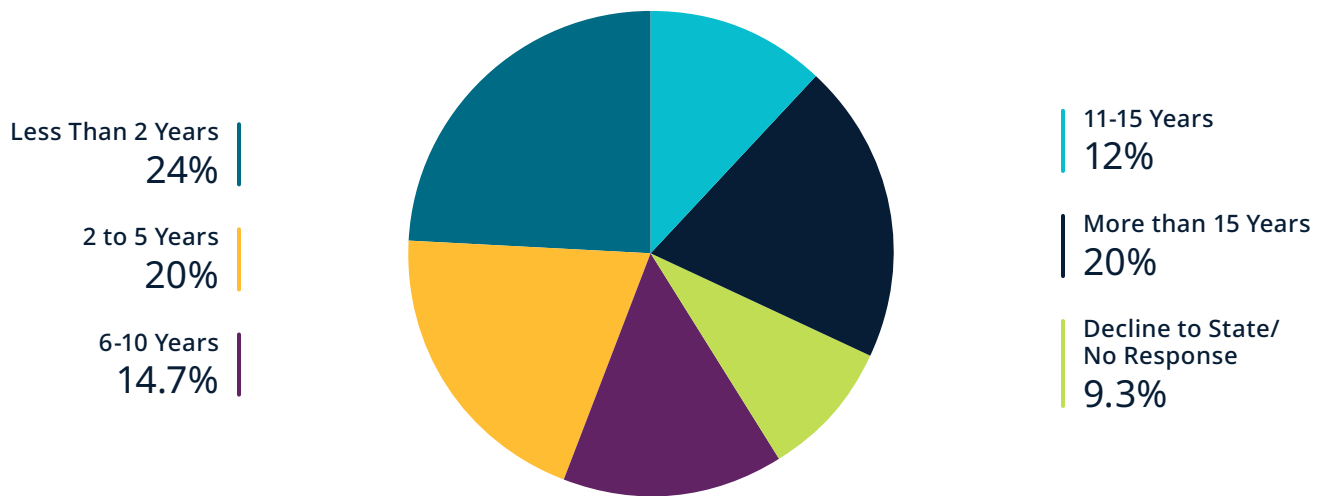
## Quotes From the Field

"I think that we have to fundamentally, imagine a world where it's unacceptable for any foundation to not have Native representation, not just in the Pacific Northwest, but I have yet to [find] the state or the territory in this country where there's a good excuse to not have board representation, I think we fundamentally need to ensure that there are senior leaders in every institution."

## Indigenous People, by Tenure

According to the 2022 DAPP Report, “nearly 45 percent of people working in philanthropy and identifying either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with another race or ethnicity have worked in philanthropy five years or fewer.”

### Indigenous People, by Tenure



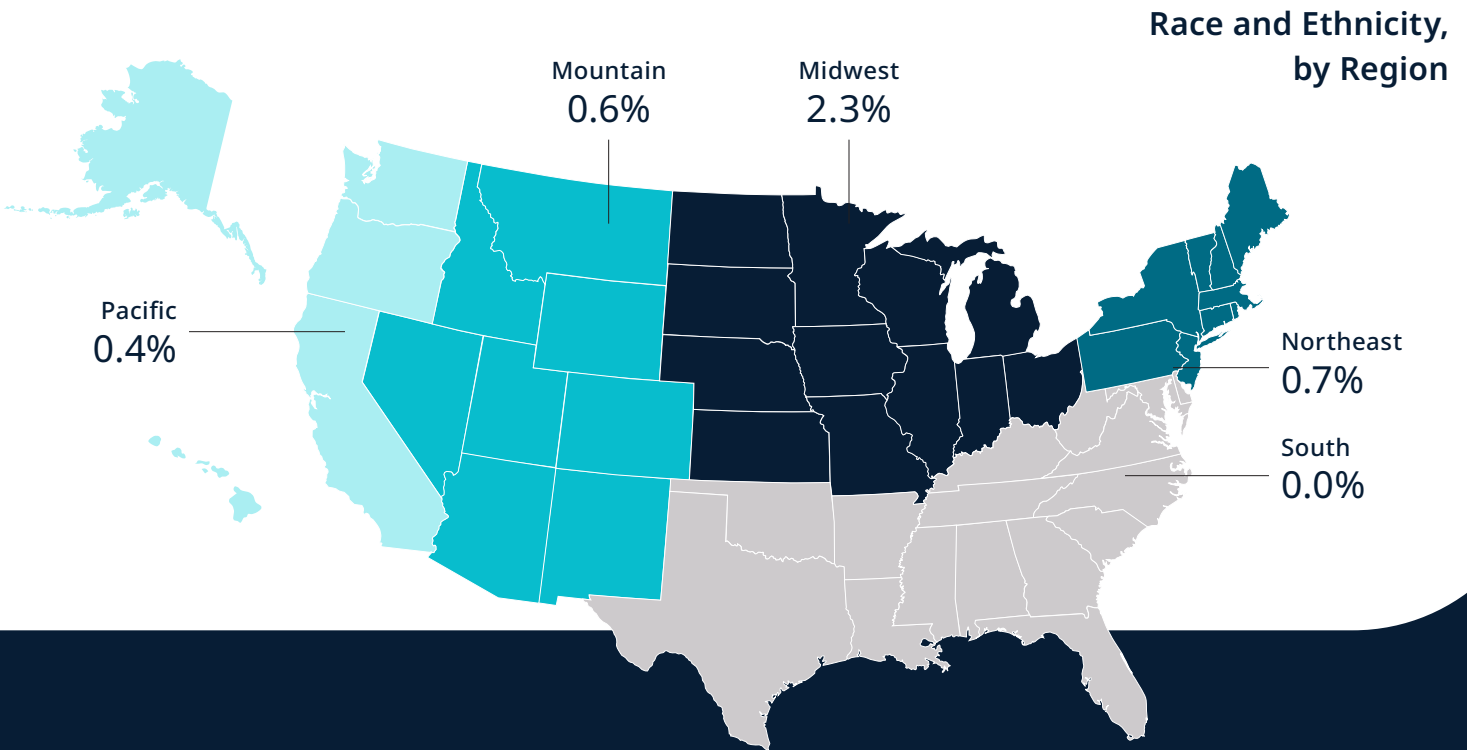
### Quotes From the Field

“When I was first hired, I served as a Program Associate to the Vice President. Due to the Vice President’s extensive responsibilities, I received a variety of supportive assignments, including drafting speeches, writing funding documents, researching various topics, keeping a pulse on current policies and legislation at multiple levels and developing strategic plans. In the process, I learned the art and science of grantmaking including how to make persuasive arguments to our team and the Board of Trustees when requesting approval for funding for various projects. I also learned about the internal workings of a foundation, and the difficulties of determining the allocation of resources. Although the work was very demanding, it was a great learning experience that prepared me well not only for a promotion but also for successfully handling future challenges.”

“At first, I really desired to become a program officer at the foundation where I was working but was told that I wasn’t qualified to become one unless I received my PhD. Even though I was already doing the work of a program director, it was another incentive to complete my degree. I also knew that I had knowledge and experience in working with ‘vulnerable’, grassroots communities, and communities of color that I could contribute. I learned that very few resources had been directed to Native communities. Well, due to all these motivating factors, I restarted my PhD program and while working on my dissertation, I was offered the position of a Program Director of youth and education. I found it to be highly rewarding and meaningful.”

# Indigenous People in Philanthropy, by Region

Indigenous People in philanthropy who identified solely as Indigenous were most represented in the Midwest.



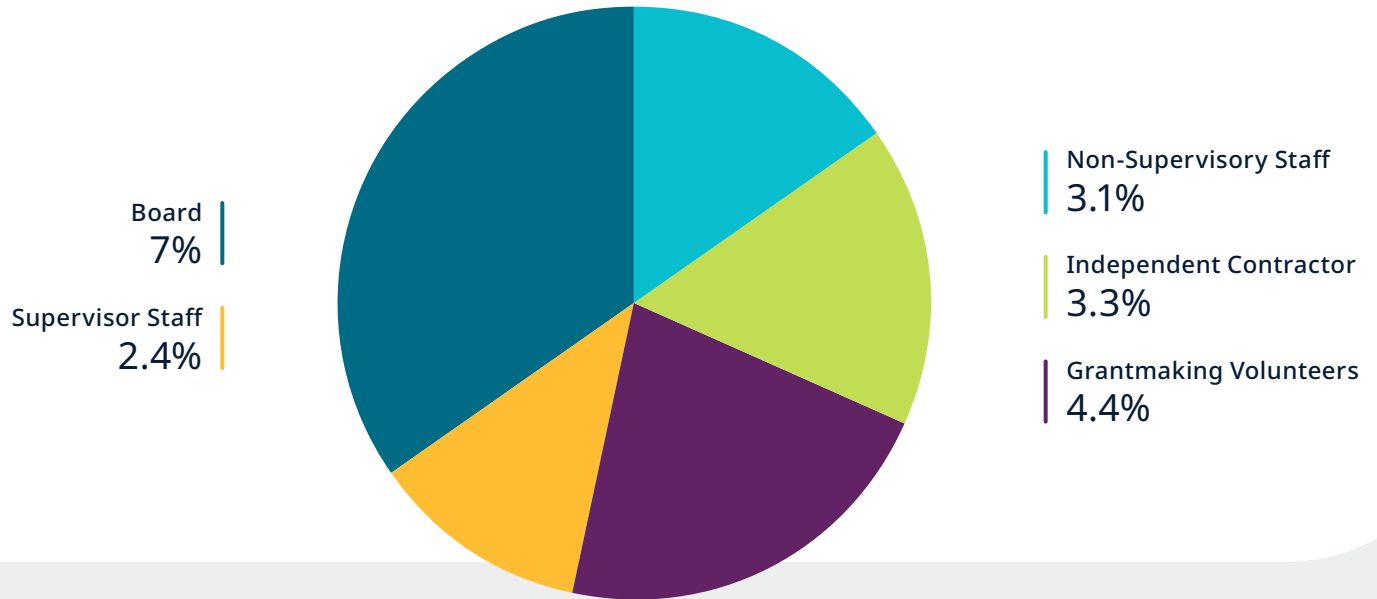
## Quotes From the Field

"Honestly, at that time, I never thought I was going to work for a foundation. It just didn't occur to me as a possibility...When I was the New Mexico Indian Affairs cabinet secretary, a foundation provided resources that helped Tribal leaders implement this really amazing vision for a sort of a new approach to State-Tribal Relations. This was at a time when we were in a huge economic downturn, and agency budgets were getting cut and people were being placed on furlough. At this crucial time philanthropy jumped in and provided resources that were pivotal to helping Tribal leaders achieve their vision in New Mexico. It reminded me of the time that another foundation stepped forward decades earlier to help my Pueblo buy back a very significant part of our traditional lands. Those experiences eventually brought me into the foundation world because I felt a sense of responsibility. It's actually hard to get into philanthropy. It is a series of relationships and circumstances that usually conspire to keep Native people out of foundations, particularly decision-making roles. And I just so happened to have been in a series of situations and relationships that gave me access. I felt a really strong responsibility to reciprocate for all that philanthropy had done for Tribes in New Mexico, including my Pueblo. When I had the opportunity to do for others what was done for me and for my community, I jumped at it."

# Indigenous People in Philanthropy, by Professional Role

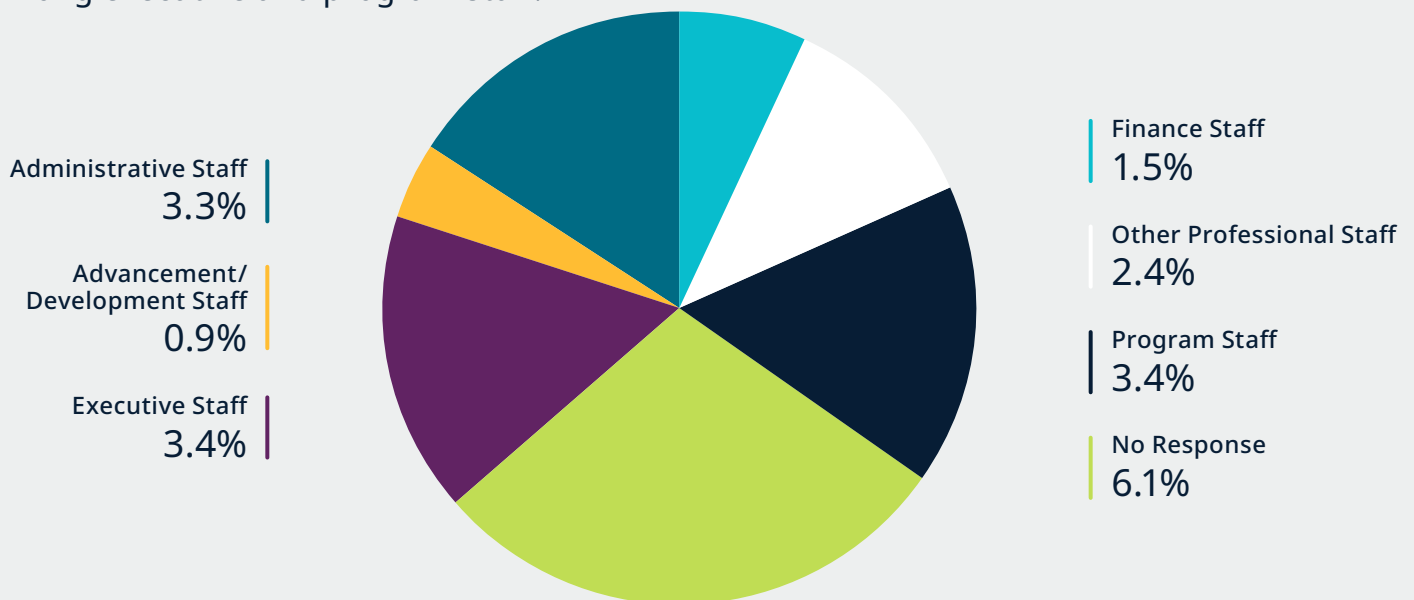
## Indigenous People, by Board, Staff, and Contractor Role

People in philanthropy who identified either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with another race or ethnicity were most represented among board of directors.



## Indigenous People, by Staff Roles

Indigenous People in philanthropy who identified either solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with another race or ethnicity were most represented among executive and program staff.



## Quotes From the Field

"If we had more folks of color on boards, and treated in the capacity to make some real decisions that organizations and a significant percentage of this space (not just the two of the 12), if we had 50% of most of these more progressive foundations that say they want to be in line with us, we could make significant change at board and executive leadership. As we see more BIPOC Executive Directors hired and CEOs changing, do they have the support to really shift their systems? Or do they hire a Black woman to lead a foundation, but then challenge her if she starts to change the other VPs to bring in more folks of color."

"I definitely didn't think this is what I would be when I grew up. I didn't know that I would be a program officer at a foundation. I don't think I had any sense of what foundations were... and it still feels like a foreign idea, community foundations in particular. This idea that there are these individual donors that then get the tax break, and a lot of money sits there - there's all kinds of things that I'm still learning about the structure of philanthropy. But I think my journey has felt relatively organic. Coming from the arts background and working within the field of arts advocacy, and trying to be of service to community and in community, this work just felt like sort of the natural next step. Rather than maybe my time, or my physical labor, or the other things that I was trying to share with folks, now helping to actually allocate funds, ideally equitably, with more money to Indigenous folks, through the foundation feels like the same ethos. I'm certainly trying to bring my Indigenous values to it. I think that within our community, we're starting to see and understand that we need to have advocates inside of these institutions where all the funds are kept, and all the decisions are made."

"Serving as a Native program officer, it's been a journey to really lean into transforming philanthropy. There continues to be a consistent group of funders, both nationally and internationally, during the past decade or so that support Native and Indigenous communities. We must change this in philanthropy because we need more funders that are able to partner with Native people and Native organizations. We need to diversify funding ecosystems and partnerships. It cannot always be the same group of funders that continue to invest in Native and Indigenous communities."



## Indigenous People, by Select Intersectional Identities

According to the 2022 DAPP Report, “Indigenous people working in philanthropy and identifying solely as Indigenous or as Indigenous in combination with another race or ethnicity were more likely to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual; transgender; and as a person with a disability. They were also slightly less likely to identify as a person born outside of the United States.”

### Indigenous People, by Select Intersectional Identities





## Quotes From the Field

"A couple of key things that I think are absolutely critical to our Native LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit people [are] safe spaces. One of the reasons I cared so much about gay-straight alliances back then is that it was a really deliberate way even if you had a student at school with one self-identifying queer LGBTQ+ person to find allies and to create a safe space and to make changes at the school level and that matters a lot so much of what we're talking about here especially as this new organization gets off the ground is creating that safe space and community, because that's what builds that power to start to push back on this and I hate to say, I think we're going have to be doing a lot of the same things we did before but at least we know what we need to do to get there because we're going to have to, as Rebecca said, we've got to have our people advocating and drawing in allies to support us at the very local level, but also at the state and national levels, we have to be able to join these coalitions of other people pushing back on the broader attacks on especially the trans community, so in order to do that we have to have those safe spaces and that community built and some of these new national advocacy platforms like we're trying to get off the ground here, I think you know we're going to learn what we did in the past, apply those lessons to the future, but it all starts with that safe space and community first."<sup>2</sup>

2 Quote Derived from "Member Education Sessions: Two-Spirit & Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Experiences" Broadcast.



# Indigenous Centered: Community Foundations and Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals

In August of 2023, Native Americans in Philanthropy developed a study to examine 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. A part of this study included a deeper look at Native representation amongst the staff and leadership of community foundations.<sup>3</sup>

## 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.

## Trainings and Workshops on Indigenous Histories, Issues, and Causes for Staff and Leadership

The community foundation survey evaluated the foundation's implementation of educational programs/training 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.

<sup>3</sup> Yepa, W. (2023). Indigenous Centered: Community Foundations and Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals. Native Americans in Philanthropy



# A Call to Action for Philanthropy

We propose six goals that the sector should consider to support Indigenous Peoples, our communities, and the individuals who work or aspire to work in this field.



**Advocate for Indigenous rights and interests** by supporting policies that protect Indigenous land and water, promote Indigenous cultures and languages, ensure that Indigenous Peoples have a voice in all decision-making that affects their communities, among others.



**Indigenous Peoples have a wealth of knowledge and experience** to offer the field of philanthropy. When reflecting on the stories shared by the Native professionals within her dissertation study, Dana lifts up the enormous value that Indigenous Peoples bring to the field:

- “I hope that you also recognize that these people chose to share their personal stories with a broader audience because they want you to understand what they bring to their work in philanthropy – powerful lived experiences. These are not people who were born into monetary wealth but many of whom now have the responsibility and challenge of giving away money – sometimes working within family foundations who hold complicated histories of intergenerational wealth. They are largely people from families and communities who were stripped of their resources, land, and wealth by colonization but are still working every day to help wealthy donors and foundations understand how to give and make the greatest impact. Their collective strength is their lived experiences because they have personally experienced some of the challenges of poverty and still emerged as advocates and warriors for their communities. A central argument in my body of work is that Native Peoples who are working in philanthropy already understand the real complexity of the issues facing our communities. They also know that we already have insights and solutions, but we need funding to enact those strategies and heal our communities.”<sup>4</sup>



**Explore ways to increase your organizational commitment** to support Native communities throughout your entire philanthropic strategy, including representation within staff, trustees, grant review process, and DEI goals and outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> Arviso, D., Yepa, W. (2023), Native Voices Rising 10 Year Impact Report. Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy.



**Deepen your organizational learning** by engaging in meaningful efforts to understand how to resource Native-led organizations.<sup>5</sup>

- “I think the most difficult thing has been being a constant advocate for Native communities. There’s such an extreme disconnect in understanding Native ways of knowing and being that it gets exhausting. The institution is talking about caring [for] and centering Native communities, and then demonstrates an incredible lack of will to actually make those statements actionable. It’s just exhausting to try and interpret and advocate constantly ... it was the biggest challenge, and feeling responsible for educating on all things Native with people starting at a zero baseline, you know. So understanding and facilitating understanding of [their] belief in Native invisibilization within data sets, understanding [the history of] boarding schools, understanding termination, understanding the fight for recognition, understanding why there are multiple Tribes within federally recognized Tribes... [and building] all of that understanding.”



**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.

- “I do feel a major sense of responsibility and accountability to my community. And the way that shows up, it’s not like I’m running to my community, sometimes I’m asking permission, or, you know, I may not be reporting out on everything, but there are ways that I check in with elders and people that I look up to in this work and to get their approval...Am I going about this in a good way, because I know that I can, my community will call me out...I feel accountable to the ecosystem of Native leaders that are in this work.”



**Prioritize the inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ individuals** in all fields, including philanthropy. Historically, these voices have been sidelined and neglected, leading to a lack of representation in decision-making processes. This lack of representation perpetuates systemic issues and prevents progress from being made towards creating truly inclusive and equitable societies. We must recognize the unique experiences, challenges, and perspectives of LGBTQ2S+ individuals and ensure that their voices are heard and actively sought out. This means providing opportunities for LGBTQ2S+ individuals to serve in leadership roles and encouraging their participation in philanthropic efforts.

<sup>5</sup> Arviso, D., Yepa, W. (2023), Native Voices Rising 10 Year Impact Report. Common Counsel Foundation and Native Americans in Philanthropy.

# Glossary on Indigenous Identities

Indigenous identity is nuanced. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to Indigenous identity, and individual preferences may vary from person to person. Terminology used to refer to Indigenous Peoples is a complex nuanced issue that is influenced by many factors but three key aspects that factor into this conversation are:

- 1 The **self-determined label** that an Indigenous **person** prefers for themselves.
- 2 The **self-determined label** that an Indigenous **community** prefers for themselves.
- 3 The **label(s) given** to Indigenous **Peoples and communities** that are deeply entrenched within the nomenclature.

We fully encourage everyone to educate themselves further after they become acquainted with the starting information listed here.

- **Aboriginal** – Aboriginal (with a capital 'A') is generally not used to describe the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as North America and is more widely used to describe the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as Australia. However, the appropriate language and terminology used to name Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is a nuanced issue that is NOT explored in this guide and we encourage you to seek out additional resources.
- **Alaska Native** - Alaska Natives are the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as Alaska.
- **American Indian** – A term that refers to the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as the contiguous United States and usually excludes Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. This term is more commonly used in academia and as a demographic label, and are codified legal terms used in treaty documents. According to the 2020 Indigenous Futures Survey, this term has generally fallen out of favor for self-identification.
- **First Nations** - A term that refers to the Indigenous Peoples of what is now known as Canada.
- **Indian** – Some Natives use “Indian” or “NDN” as a colloquial or slang name for each other, but this term should never be used by a non-Native to refer to an Indigenous person or Peoples. However, the word “Indian” is also still used in the following contexts:
  - Federal agencies such as Bureau of Indian Affairs or Indian Health Services.
  - Names of federally recognized Tribes e.g. Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, etc.
- **Indian Country** – Among Native Peoples, this term is used as the collective name for Native communities in what is now known as the United States. It is also used as a legal term to classify the lands in which Native Peoples can practice tribal self-governance.
- **Indigenous** – The original inhabitants of a geographic location. It is often used as an umbrella term for Native Peoples no matter where they originate from. Also, when referring to Indigenous Peoples, be sure to capitalize the word.

- **Native** - A term growing in popularity that many feel is more appropriate than “Native American” as a descriptor for Peoples whose ancestry predates America as a country. It is also used as a synonym for Indigenous. The “N” should always be capitalized.
- **Native American** – A term that refers to American Indians and Alaska Natives and usually excludes Native Hawaiians.
- **Native Hawaiian** - Native Hawaiians or Kānaka Maoli, are the Indigenous Peoples of Hawai’i. It is considered both inappropriate and inaccurate to address Native Hawaiians as Native Americans since the Kingdom of Hawai’i was overthrown in a coup led by American businessmen with the help of U.S. troops. In 1993, the U.S. Government officially apologized in a resolution that acknowledged the coup as illegal and “further acknowledges that the Native Hawaiian people never directly relinquished to the United States their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people over their national lands”.
- **Two-Spirit** - Two-Spirit is an umbrella term used by some Indigenous individuals to refer to the complex sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identities in Indigenous cultures. Two-Spirit people may identify as having a balance of masculine and feminine spirits, or as having a spirit that transcends gender entirely. Two-Spirit identities are diverse and are different across Indigenous cultures, communities, and individuals. Also, Two-Spirit people may use terms from their Native languages to describe sexuality or gender identity. However, it’s also important to note that not every Tribe, culture, or traditional language has a word or phrase to describe Two-Spirit and/or queer individuals.

## Acknowledgements



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NATIVE AMERICANS  
IN PHILANTHROPY