

MEETING THE MOMENT

**A CALL TO
RADICALLY TRANSFORM
PHILANTHROPY FOR
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

DECEMBER 2024



NDN COLLECTIVE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Welcome from Nick Tilsen, President & CEO of NDN Collective | 3 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Acknowledgements | 7 |
| Methods and Limitations | 8 |
| Methods | 8 |
| Limitations | 10 |
| Key Takeaways | 12 |
| Findings | 15 |
| Traditional Philanthropic Giving to Indigenous Causes 2018 - 2022 | 15 |
| Reported Foundation Giving | 15 |
| Expanded and New Indigenous-led Organizations | 21 |
| Data Limitations in Measuring Foundation Giving | 22 |
| Increased Conversations and Awareness Among Funders | 23 |
| Influx of Funding from the COVID-19 Pandemic & Racial Justice Responses | 24 |
| Increased Momentum in LANDBACK | 26 |
| Evolution of Giving Vehicles to Indigenous Causes | 27 |
| Trends in High-Net-Worth Individual Giving to Indigenous Causes | 27 |
| Continued Growth of Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) | 29 |
| Promise and Pitfalls of Social Bonds and Pledges | 30 |
| Shifts in Approaches to Giving to Indigenous Causes | 31 |
| Moving From Program Support to General Operating Support | 31 |
| Intersectional Funding | 32 |
| Challenges and Opportunities | 32 |
| Challenges | 33 |
| Opportunities | 34 |
| Recommendations for Philanthropy | 35 |
| A Call for Radical Transformation | 36 |

Researched and produced by
Third Plateau Social Impact Strategies



WELCOME

From Nick Tilsen, President & CEO of NDN Collective

Part of our motivation to launch NDN Collective was that Indigenous Peoples have been fighting over less than one-half of 1% of philanthropic giving for decades. We were tired of knowing that we have solutions in our communities to solve the world's most pressing challenges, yet we have been systematically overlooked and underfunded. Our goal as an organization is to resource Indigenous self-determination at unprecedented levels and demonstrate what is possible when our peoples have the assets and autonomy to create the changes we know are possible in our communities.

This report and others show that philanthropy continues to chronically underinvest in the visions and ideas that our peoples have to create a world that is equitable, just, and abundant for all people and Mother Earth. We commissioned this research to help us understand whether and how the funding landscape for Indigenous Peoples has shifted since our inception in 2018 and serve as a jumping off point to determine where we go from here.

The story told by this report is the same story that has been told before: Indigenous Peoples are still not receiving an equitable share of philanthropic resources. The slight increase in funding from 2018 - 2022 is a result of a multitude of people, organizations, and events, including the work of NDN Collective and our partners doing grassroots organizing, activism, and community development; grassroots activism that drove a societal response to the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police in the form of unprecedented investment and attention to racial justice; and wealth transferring into the hands of more women and young people who are starting to change the face of philanthropy.

“No matter the political ebbs and flows, the field of philanthropy has a duty to Indigenous Peoples because it would not exist if not for the colonization of our lands and extraction of our resources.”

And there is much, much more to be done as we are now witnessing a retraction of many of these commitments to racial justice in 2023 and 2024. Through all of this, NDN Collective has been a loud, unapologetic voice calling for investment in the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, recognition of the role we play in solving today's most pressing issues, and the interconnectedness of the struggles between Black, Indigenous, and all people of color and Mother Earth.

While we are proud of the work we have contributed to that has resulted in an increase of philanthropic investment in Indigenous Peoples, we also stand firm that the progress outlined in this report is not nearly enough. Neoliberalism has kept us stagnant for so long, especially in the field of philanthropy. We have gone through the motions of change for decades, yet we have seen the numbers stay the same. Political polarization, the crackdown on movement

organizations, and backtracking on racial justice commitments show that advocacy work is imperative at this moment in history.

We must continue to provide infrastructure for our movements in ways that lean into the full complexity of our identities and support people putting their bodies on the line in service of a just and equitable world.

We believe that for philanthropy to truly support Indigenous Peoples at scale, we would need to see at least 10% of philanthropic assets transferred back to the original stewards of the land upon which the wealth was built and whose work serves all people and Mother Earth. No matter the political ebbs and flows, the field of philanthropy has a duty to Indigenous Peoples because it would not exist if not for the colonization of our lands and extraction of our resources.

We are optimistic about the path forward, but know that there is still much work to be done. We want to share the findings from this report with the field in the spirit of collaboration and with the hope that we can work together to change the underlying systems and structures that continue to overlook our work and our worth. It is not enough for us to continue to fight for less than 1% of grant funding. Indigenous-led organizations must come together to collectively demand what we are owed and recognize that we are all stronger when we work together towards a better future.



Nick Tilsen

President & CEO, NDN Collective
December 2024



INTRODUCTION

NDN Collective (NDN) commissioned this report in September 2023 to better understand the extent to which philanthropy to Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations has shifted since NDN's founding in 2018. This report examines existing barriers and highlights potential opportunities for these groups, as well as trends in giving from 2018 through 2022. While NDN invests in Indigenous self-determination across Turtle Island which includes Canada and Mexico, this report focuses on the colonial boundaries of the United States given publicly available data sets.

A Note on Terminology:

Upon its founding, NDN Collective made a political decision to use the term “**Indigenous Peoples**” to describe who we are and who we are accountable to: “ethnic communities whose ancestry descends from the earliest, original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied, and/or colonized the region more recently.”¹

This definition encompasses the original peoples of any given region around the world, and is distinct from other terms, such as Native American, that stem from a unique relationship with the U.S. federal government and includes more than 574 federally-recognized tribes. In line with the United Nations definition of Indigenous Peoples, this term intentionally fights back against the erasure of individuals and communities who do not fit the narrow definition created by colonial governments and is an acknowledgment of our work across Turtle Island, untethered from colonial borders. We acknowledge that other organizations and people utilize different terminology for their own nuanced and political reasons.

Throughout this report, we use the term “Indigenous” when referring to NDN Collective's work and purview and follow the terminology used by relevant data sources in all other instances, including:

- **American Indian:** A term that refers to the Indigenous Peoples of 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. Like “Alaska Native,” it has a very important legal and political classification because this is the term referenced throughout U.S. statutes that govern the nation-to-nation relationship between tribes and the federal government, grounded in the constitution and individual treaties.²
- **Alaska Native:** Alaska Natives are the Indigenous Peoples of Alaska. It is also a distinct legal and political classification under U.S. law.³
- **First Nations:** A term that refers to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.⁴

¹ “Who We Fund”, NDN Collective, <https://ndncollective.org/who-we-fund/>.

² “Glossary”, Native Americans in Philanthropy, Accessed: November 12, 2024, <https://nativephilanthropy.org/glossary>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

- **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.⁵
- **Native Hawaiian:** Native Hawaiians, or Kanaka Maoli, are the Indigenous Peoples of Hawai'i. It is considered inappropriate and inaccurate to address Native Hawaiians as Native Americans since the Kingdom of Hawai'i was a sovereign nation overthrown in a coup led by American businessmen with the help of U.S. troops.⁶

This report is structured as follows:

1. Traditional Philanthropic Giving to Indigenous Causes 2018-2022

- Reported Foundation Giving
- Expanded and New Indigenous-led Organizations
- Data Limitations in Measuring Foundation Giving
- Increased Conversations and Awareness Among Funders
- Influx of Funding from COVID-19 Pandemic & Racial Justice Responses
- Increased Momentum in LANDBACK

2. Evolution of Giving Vehicles to Indigenous Causes

- Trends in High-Net-Worth Individual Giving to Indigenous Causes
- Continued Growth of Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)
- Promise and Pitfalls of Social Bonds and Pledges

3. Shifts in Approaches to Giving to Indigenous Causes

- Moving from Program Support to General Operating Support
- Intersectional Funding

4. Challenges and Opportunities

- Challenges
- Opportunities

5. Recommendations for Philanthropy

6. A Call for Radical Transformation

⁵ "Glossary", Native Americans in Philanthropy, Accessed: November 12, 2024, <https://nativephilanthropy.org/glossary>.

⁶ Ibid.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank everyone who contributed to creating this report. We recognize that we are building on the work of other Indigenous Peoples, organizations, and allies who are examining similar questions, and we hope that this work furthers the conversation and moves us closer to our shared goal of shifting power and resources in philanthropy towards Indigenous Peoples. Especially helpful in the crafting of this report were the interviewees and reports that provided us rich data in order to understand this topic. We sincerely appreciate the work that went into each report and the time each interviewee dedicated to answering our questions and sharing a small portion of their knowledge.

Specifically, NDN Collective and Third Plateau would like to acknowledge the following interviewees, who provided us with their valuable insights and experiences:

- Jodi Archambault, Anpo
- Carly Bad Heart Bull, Native Ways Federation
- Rajasvini Bhansali, Solidaire Network
- Ellie Buteau, Center for Effective Philanthropy
- Jason Franklin, Ktisis Capital
- Christina Im, Center for Effective Philanthropy
- Edgar Villanueva, Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital

Additionally, we want to express our gratitude to Edgar Villanueva⁷, Founder and CEO of Decolonizing Wealth Project, for his guidance and feedback on the data in this report.

Teacher and students at the Oceti Sakowin Community Academy, a culture-based school for Indigenous students supported by NDN Collective. Photo by Angel White Eyes.



⁷ Edgar Villanueva serves on the Board of NDN Collective.

METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Methods

In collaboration with NDN, Third Plateau developed the following set of research questions:

1. How has the amount of philanthropic giving to Indigenous causes evolved from 2018-2022?
2. How has the share of philanthropic giving to Indigenous communities and causes shifted over time?
3. How, if at all, have giving vehicles (grants, DAFs, social bonds, etc.) to Indigenous causes evolved?
4. To what extent, if any, have funders shifted giving from program support to general operating support to Indigenous causes?
5. How, if at all, have trends in high-net-worth individual giving changed?
6. What are the barriers and opportunities for Indigenous-focused nonprofits to connect with funders? How have these shifted from 2018-2022?

Third Plateau took a mixed methods approach to answering these research questions, reviewing available data on foundation funding, reports on the subject, and interviewing field leaders from November 2023 through May 2024. The reports used as data sources in this research are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Reports as Data Sources.

| Report | Organization |
|---|---|
| “Investing in Native Communities” | Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy |
| “Overlooked Part Two: Foundation Support for Native American Leaders and Communities” | Center for Effective Philanthropy |
| “Growing Inequity: Large Foundation Giving to Native American Organizations and Causes 2006-2014” | First Nations Development Institute |
| “Community Foundation Giving to Native American Causes” | First Nations Development Institute |

| Report | Organization |
|---|----------------------------------|
| “America’s Most Generous Givers 2023: The Nation’s 25 Top Philanthropists” | Forbes |
| “Indigenous Centered: Improving Equity and Accountability for Native American Communities with Community Foundations” | Native Americans in Philanthropy |
| “Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report” | Native Americans in Philanthropy |
| “Give Native List” | Native Ways Federation |
| “On Our Terms: Supporting a Thriving Native Nonprofit Sector” | Native Ways Federation |

Table 2 contains the name, title, organization, and Tribal affiliation of each of the 10 interviewees that we spoke with for this report. The interviews were semi-structured, and featured questions about the individual’s experiences in the philanthropic space. Specifically, interviewees were asked:

- How, if at all, has giving to Indigenous communities changed from 2018-2022?
- How, if at all, have giving vehicles changed?
- Who are the major foundations giving to Indigenous communities?
- What are the barriers and opportunities for Indigenous-led organizations?

Table 2. National Philanthropic Scan Interviewees.

| Name | Title | Organization | Tribal Affiliation |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Jodi Archambault | Director | Anpo/Indigenize/WEND Collective | Hunkpapa and Oglala Lakota |
| Carly Bad Heart Bull | Executive Director | Native Ways Federation | Bdewakantunwan Dakota/Muskogee Creek, Citizen of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe |
| Rajasvini Bhansali | Executive Director | Solidaire Network | N/A |
| Ellie Buteau | Director of Research Projects and Special | Center for Effective Philanthropy | N/A |

| Name | Title | Organization | Tribal Affiliation |
|------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| | Advisor on Research Methodology and Analysis | | |
| Jason Franklin | Founder & Principal | Ktisis Capital | N/A |
| Christina Im | Senior Analyst, Research | Center for Effective Philanthropy | N/A |
| Edgar Villanueva | Founder and CEO | Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital, NDN Collective Board Member | Enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe |

Quantitative data analysis was completed by compiling information from various reports and data sources into Excel. Qualitative data analysis also used Excel for a matrix-based thematic analysis of interview notes. Qualitative data is used throughout the report to provide deeper insights and context into the quantitative data, especially where there are gaps.

Limitations

As other reports have acknowledged, the publicly available data focused on giving to Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations is inherently limited, as it only includes funders and nonprofits registered as 501(c)(3) organizations with the IRS and who report their own data each year through form 990s, the IRS tax reporting form for nonprofit organizations. This creates the following limitations to the information we are able to present:

1. Gifts to fiscally sponsored projects are not disaggregated from the data of their fiscal sponsor, which are not typically Indigenous-led. However, the individual project might be Indigenous-led.
2. Gifts from donor-advised funds (DAFs) are not able to be disaggregated from their host organizations.
3. Data from giving vehicles that are not foundations, such as LLCs, are not included in the grant data, as they do not have the same reporting requirements as public or private foundations. LLCs are covered in a separate section of this report focused on Yield Giving (MacKenzie Scott).
4. 990s are only filed for the previous tax year and may not be publicly available until later, causing reporting delays.
5. 990 forms also may have missing information, or the information may not be read correctly as the 990 is released electronically.

6. The scope is limited to the U.S., as defined by colonial borders, within Turtle Island.

Another major factor limiting the data is differing definitions of Indigenous-led organizations. Even within the organizations themselves, there is different terminology utilized (Native, Indigenous, Tribal), and there is no single definition of what it means to be Native-, Indigenous-, or Tribal-led. In this report, we follow the terminology used by the relevant data source, and if none is specified we use Indigenous, as detailed in our Note on Terminology.

Despite these limitations to the data, we believe looking at trends and making sense of them with those on the ground is a helpful exercise to deepen our understanding of how the landscape is shifting over time. We also acknowledged these challenges and discussed them with interviewees and staff at NDN to see what meaning we can make from the data, even if it is flawed.

NDN Collective staff learning about "tiny house" construction as part of a vision to support unhoused Indigenous people in Rapid City, South Dakota. Photo by Willi White.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Giving to Indigenous communities increased overall.** From 2018 to 2022, **reported foundation giving to Native communities increased by nearly 109%.⁸ Total giving to Native communities in this timeframe was \$2.7 billion as of August 2024.⁹** However, this figure undercounts actual dollars, given challenges with the underlying dataset including not counting funding for fiscally sponsored projects, gifts from DAFs or LLCs, and delayed reporting of 990 data from the IRS.
- 2. Indigenous communities are still not receiving an equitable amount of funding. Native communities received only 0.36% of total funding from philanthropic foundations from 2018 to 2022.^{10,11}** In 2022, the percentage of grant dollars going to Native communities was 0.44%, yet American Indians and Alaska Natives make up 2.9% of the population per the 2020 Census.¹² Indigenous Peoples also continue to be underrepresented in foundation staffing and leadership.¹³
- 3. The states receiving the highest amount of grant dollars for Indigenous communities are South Dakota, Colorado, Alaska, California, and New Mexico.¹⁴** Comparing grants to Native communities to total funding, South Dakota has the highest percentage of grant dollars going to Native communities at almost 16%. The next highest percentage was Alaska, at 12.95%, followed by New Mexico (4.37%), Colorado (2.01%), and California (0.25%). States receiving the least amount of grant dollars for Native communities from 2018 to 2022 were Delaware (\$1 million), South Carolina (\$500,000) and West Virginia (\$200,000).¹⁵
- 4. The top three institutional funders to Native communities from 2018 to 2022 were the Ford Foundation, Bush Foundation, and ICS Support Organization, with a combined \$361.7 million in funding.¹⁶** Other top funders include Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, National Philanthropic Trust, Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (DAF), Novo Foundation, New Venture Fund (Fiscal Sponsor), W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.¹⁷

⁸ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Candid Foundation Directory, Geographic Focus: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

¹² “Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census”; United States Census Bureau; August 2021; <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

¹³ “Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report”, Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2024, [https://20951050.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/20951050/Reports/NAP-IPP-report-spring-2024\(web\).pdf](https://20951050.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/20951050/Reports/NAP-IPP-report-spring-2024(web).pdf).

¹⁴ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

- 5. New and growing Indigenous-led organizations are helping shift the funding landscape.** For example, **NDN Collective brought in over \$177.5 million in revenue from philanthropy from 2018 to 2022.** Racial justice work and support for the LANDBACK movement are two areas of giving with increased momentum.
- 6. Several types of philanthropic giving outside of foundation grants have emerged in support of Indigenous communities** including giving from individuals such as MacKenzie Scott, DAFs, and social bonds. A review of publicly available data from 2020-2022 indicated that **Mackenzie Scott gave at least \$205.2M through Yield Giving to Indigenous- or Native-led or serving organizations.**
- 7. Additional shifts in giving include fewer restrictions and more general operating support,** which is especially important for Indigenous organizations as an indicator of self-determination and sovereignty. **Indigenous issues are also beginning to be seen through a more intersectional lens** in the areas of democracy, climate change, and health.
- 8. Key challenges facing the field:**
 - a. Indigenous Peoples are still underrepresented in foundation giving compared to the percentage of the population they represent and remain underrepresented in foundation staffing and leadership.
 - b. Conversations and awareness-building may be helpful, but more needs to be done to create broader systemic changes. While we have seen an increase in overall grant dollars going to Indigenous-serving organizations, there is still work to do in this field in terms of shifting philanthropic control, changing the power and decision-making balances, and moving beyond educating funders.
 - c. Although funding for Indigenous communities has increased since 2018, many foundations and nonprofits still operate with a competitive and scarcity mindset, rather than one of collective abundance and collaboration.
 - d. Data limitations and differing definitions make it impossible to accurately measure the field.
- 9. Notable opportunities for the field:**
 - a. Apply more pressure to move funders from conversations to action and create mechanisms to hold them accountable.
 - b. Focus on giving outside of institutional philanthropy (individuals, DAFs, pooled funds).
 - c. Demonstrate the impact and benefits that come with unrestricted funding to Indigenous organizations and recognize the expertise of those with lived experiences in the challenges they are working to solve and opportunities they are working to unlock.

- d. Increase collaboration across Indigenous organizations in the nonprofit sector through actions such as recommending funding for organizations outside of one's own and openly sharing data, resources, connections, and information.
- 10.** Based on the findings of this report, NDN Collective recommends the following actions for the field of philanthropy to inspire changes at the systems level:
- a. **Understand and fund Indigenous self-determination and accountability.**
 - b. **Understand and fund movement infrastructure** - the resources, skills, and people that support the entire movement ecosystem of organizations, networks, and leaders.¹⁸
 - c. **Integrate Indigenous-led organizations across your portfolios and be a good funding relative.**

11. A Call for Radical Transformation

- a. We recognize and celebrate the small but significant shifts we have been able to contribute to since our founding, and see the recommendations above as fuel for continued progress. But we know that they are not enough. **In 2025, NDN Collective will launch an *Indigenous Giving Pledge*** where funders will commit to giving 10% of their philanthropic assets to Indigenous-led and accountable organizations.

¹⁸ Loh, Penn, "How Foundations Can Co-Create Movement Infrastructure", Nonprofit Quarterly, February 6, 2024. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-foundations-can-co-create-movement-infrastructure/>.

FINDINGS

Traditional Philanthropic Giving to Indigenous Causes 2018 - 2022

Traditional philanthropic giving to Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations has been centered on foundation grantmaking to nonprofit organizations. While the percentage of total funding going to Native communities increased from 2018 to 2022, it is still below equal representation of the population, and remains at less than half a percent (0.36%). Additionally, there are certain trends in philanthropic giving, such as a focus on racial justice and LANDBACK work, that are worth exploring further. This section of the report examines:

- Reported foundation giving;
- Expanded and new Indigenous-led organizations;
- Data limitations in measuring foundation giving;
- Increased conversations and awareness among funders;
- Influx of funding from the COVID-19 pandemic & racial justice responses; and
- Increased momentum in LANDBACK.

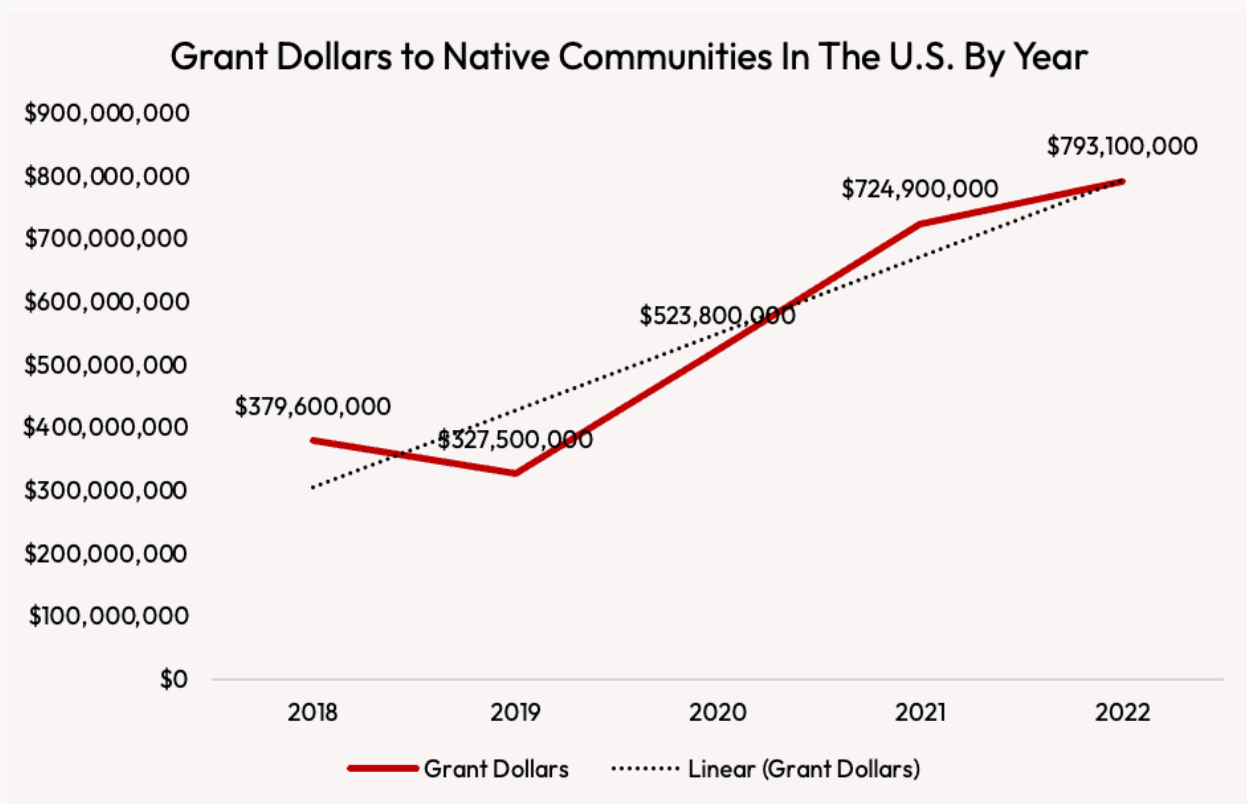
Reported Foundation Giving

According to Candid's Investing in Native Communities funding map, **overall reported foundation funding to Native communities increased from 2018 to 2022 by nearly 109%**. In 2018, total giving to Native communities is estimated at \$379.6 million, while in 2022 total giving to Native communities is estimated at \$793.1 million.¹⁹ Giving to Native communities increased year-over-year, with the exception of a slight dip to \$327.5 million in 2019.²⁰ These numbers might still be underreported because of delays in 990 filings and public release of 990 information by the IRS. Figure 1 below shows the total grant dollars to Native communities in the U.S. by year, from 2018 to 2022.

¹⁹ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: "United States," 2018-2022, August 2024.

²⁰ Ibid.

Figure 1. Overview of the Value of Total Foundation Grants to Native Communities (2018–2022)



Source: Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

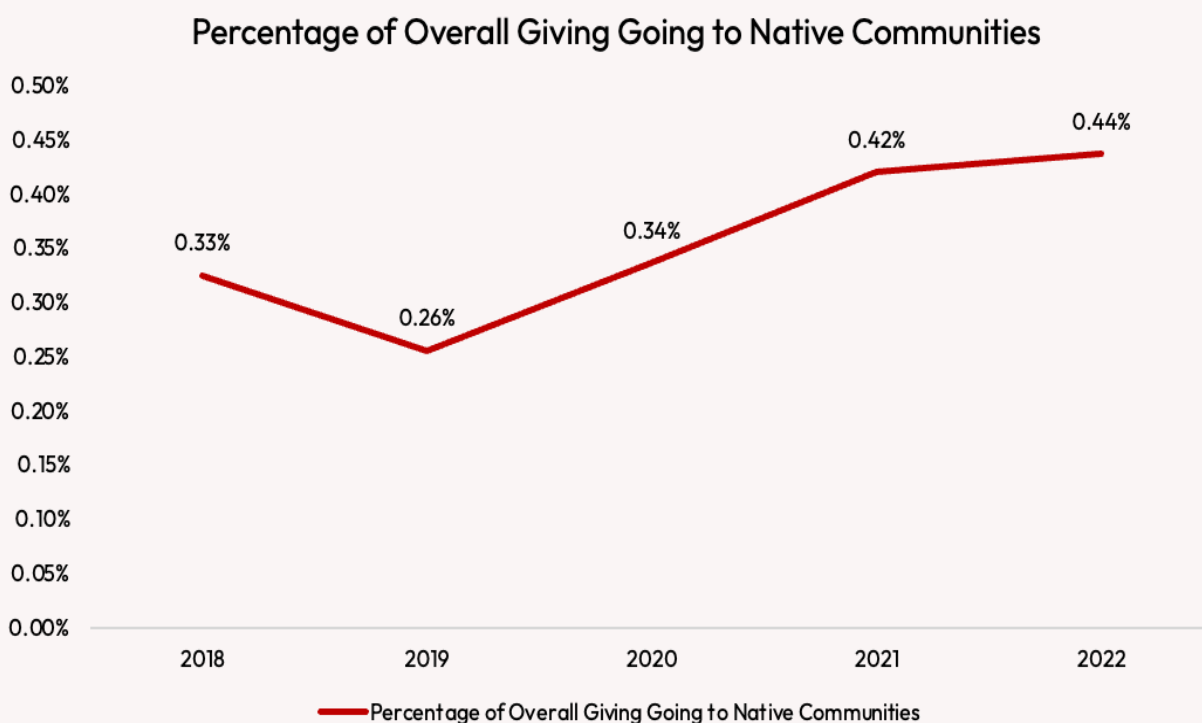
Foundation giving to Native communities as a percentage of their overall giving also increased from 0.33% in 2018 to 0.44% in 2022. Total grant dollars in the U.S. increased each year from 2018 to 2022. U.S. foundation giving increased by 55.5% (\$116.7 billion in 2018 to \$181.5 billion in 2022), in the 5-year timespan.²¹ When looking at the percentage total of reported philanthropic giving that went to Native communities, the data increased from a low in 2019 of 0.26% to a high in 2022 of 0.44%.^{22,23} The percentage of reported institutional funding going to Native communities by year is shown below in Figure 2.

²¹ Candid Foundation Directory, Geographic Focus: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

²² Ibid.

²³ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

Figure 2. Percentage of Grant Dollars Going to Native Communities (2018-2022)



Sources: Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” August 2024.; Candid Foundation Directory, Geographic Focus: “United States,” 2018-2022, August 2024.

From 2018 to 2022, total giving in the U.S. sums to \$753.7 billion, while giving to Native communities amounts to \$2.7 billion (0.36% of total giving).^{24,25} While there have been increases in the past years, these reported numbers are similar to prior reported percentages that have highlighted disproportionately low giving to Native communities. In 2019, Native Americans and Philanthropy and Candid published a report titled “[Investing in Native Communities: Philanthropic Funding for Native Americans and Communities](#)” in which they detailed how the average amount of annual funding to Native American causes and communities was approximately 0.4% of large foundations’ total funding. This average was based on Candid data from 2002 to 2016.²⁶

Top funders to Native organizations from 2018 to 2022 are listed below in Table 3. The table also includes the amount of funding from the organization during that period and the number of grants made by the organizations to Native communities.

²⁴ Candid Foundation Directory, Geographic Focus: “United States,” 2018-2022, August 2024.

²⁵ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018-2022, August 2024.

²⁶ “Investing in Native Communities: Philanthropic Funding for Native Americans and Communities”; Native Americans and Philanthropy and Candid, 2019, https://www.issuelab.org/resources/35493/35493.pdf?download=true&_ga=2.56827946.1209014558.1604941390-1925363.1604941390.

Table 3. Top 10 Funders to Native communities from 2018 to 2022.

| Funder | Amount | Number of Grants |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Ford Foundation | \$154.4 million | 260 |
| Bush Foundation | \$113.9 million | 171 |
| ICS Support Organization Inc | \$93.4 million | 5 |
| Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium | \$91 million | 110 |
| National Philanthropic Trust | \$84.2 million | 120 |
| Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (Donor-Advised Fund) | \$81.2 million | 476 |
| Novo Foundation | \$76.7 million | 291 |
| New Venture Fund (Fiscal Sponsor) | \$72.1 million | 451 |
| W.K. Kellogg Foundation | \$66.4 million | 139 |
| Andrew W. Mellon Foundation | \$63 million | 65 |

Source: Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018-2022, August 2024.

In terms of where funding to Indigenous communities went within the U.S. during this timeframe, the most funding went to Native organizations in South Dakota, which received \$304.2 million. Next was Colorado, with \$291.4 million, followed by Alaska (\$282.9 million), California (\$217.7 million), and New Mexico (\$195.7 million).²⁷ These top 5 states are listed below in Table 4, along with data on overall giving to the state, total giving to Native communities, and the percentage of grant dollars going to Native communities.

²⁷ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018-2022, August 2024.

Table 4. Overall Giving, Native Giving, and Percentage for Top Five States.

| State | Overall Giving to State | Total Giving to Native Communities | Percentage of Grant Dollars Going to Native Communities |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| South Dakota | \$1.9 billion | \$304.2 million | 15.84% |
| Colorado | \$14.5 billion | \$291.4 million | 2.01% |
| Alaska | \$2.2 billion | \$282.9 million | 12.95% |
| California | \$88.0 billion | \$271.7 million | 0.25% |
| New Mexico | \$4.5 billion | \$195.7 million | 4.37% |

Source: Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

South Dakota had the highest dollar amount of giving to Native communities as well as the highest percentage of grant dollars in the state going to these groups (15.84%). While California had the most total grant dollars of these top five states and the third highest amount of dollars going to Native communities, the funding for these groups only represents 0.25% of total funding to the state.²⁸

The states with the lowest amount of funding going to Native communities were New Jersey (\$2.8 million), Iowa (\$1.5 million), Delaware (\$1 million), South Carolina (\$500,000), and West Virginia (\$200,000).²⁹

In terms of NDN Collective’s giving, from 2018 to 2022, NDN contributed the following amounts to Indigenous-led organizations in Alaska, New Mexico, and South Dakota:

- Alaska: \$5,049,700.00 to 48 grantees;
- New Mexico: \$3,482,000 to 44 grantees;
- South Dakota: \$7,504,890.00 to 97 grantees.³⁰

When comparing the percentage of grant dollars going towards Indigenous communities, a helpful metric of comparison is the population of Indigenous Peoples within the state. Census data from the 2020 Census lists the number and percentage of people identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native people in each state. Only South Dakota has a higher percentage of

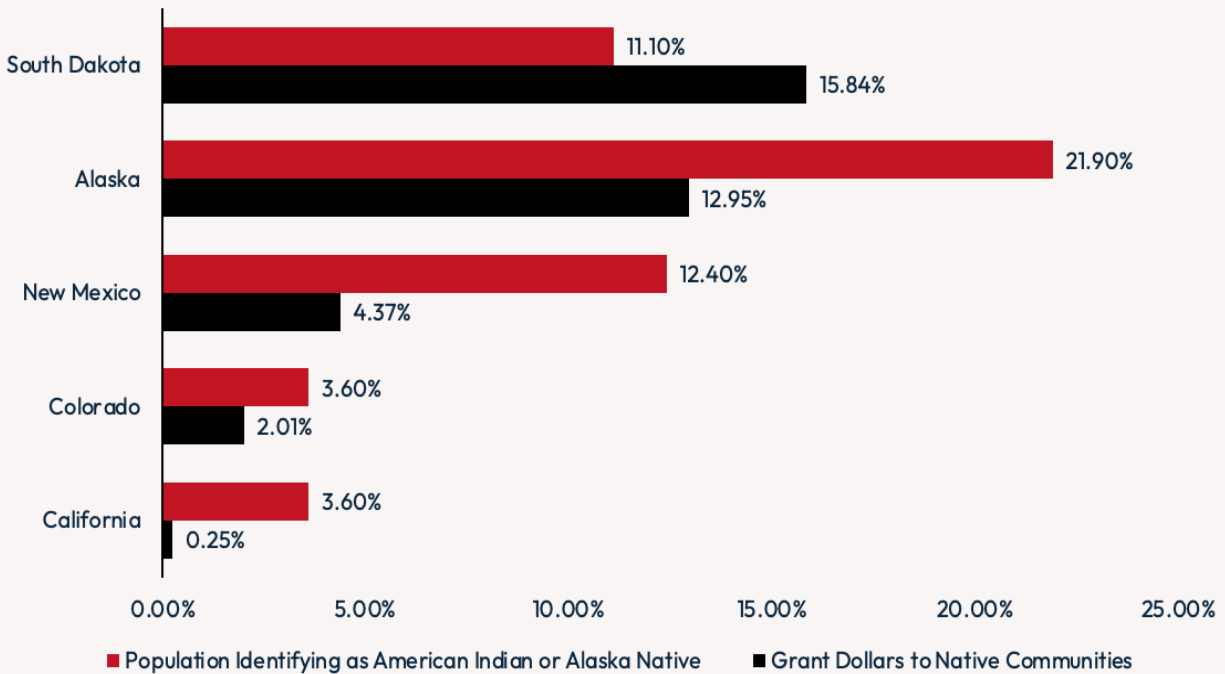
²⁸ Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ NDN is based in Rapid City, South Dakota.

grant dollars going to Native communities (15.85%) than people identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (11.10%).³¹ All of the other states lack equity in how much of their grant dollars are going to Native communities based on their population data. Figure 3 below shows the percentage of the population identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native compared to the percentage of grant dollars going to Native communities by state for the five states receiving the highest amount of funding to Native communities.

Figure 3. Percentage of Grant Dollars Going to Native Communities (2018-2022) and Percentage of Population Identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (2020) by State.



Source: Foundation Maps, Investing in Native Communities, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, Recipients: “United States,” 2018–2022, August 2024.; “Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census”; United States Census Bureau; August 2021; <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>

The 2020 Census data shows that 2.9% of the overall U.S. population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, although this number may be lower than the actual percentage due to issues with the collection of the 2020 Census.³² However, from 2018 to 2022, only 0.36% of grant dollars went to Native communities. The previously noted 0.4% statistic is a frequently referenced data point in the field, proving how Indigenous communities are underrepresented in foundation funding and grantmaking. According to a report by Native Ways Federation, \$3 billion or 3% of the \$105 billion disseminated in 2022 would be closer in proportion to the Native

³¹ “Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census”; United States Census Bureau; August 2021; <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

³² Ibid.

population.³³ The report goes on to argue that if philanthropy wanted to address the long-term underfunding of Native-led nonprofits, it would have to give \$5.8 billion, or 5.5%, annually, and that adequately addressing injustices perpetrated by colonizers and the U.S. government would require a minimum of 10%, or \$10.5 billion.³⁴

Despite increased awareness and conversation about inequitable funding for Indigenous communities, it is clear that not much has changed in real giving dollars since the 2019 study, as large shifts in the data have not been seen. This begs the question of how effective donor education is versus more equitable shifts in philanthropic power, control, and decision-making.

Expanded and New Indigenous-led Organizations

While the above data tells the story of some increased funding going to existing Native-led and Native-focused organizations, since 2018, several Indigenous- or Native-led organizations have launched and/or grown, changing the landscape.

According to Native Ways Federation’s annual list of [Native-Led Nonprofits, approximately 43 new Native-led organizations were established from 2018-2022.](#)³⁵ While the number of new organizations established was lowest in 2020 with three new groups, there was a rebound in 2021 and 2022 with 12 and 11 new organizations established, respectively.

Edgar Villanueva, Founder and CEO of Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital, noted that 2018 was a critical year for Indigenous-led organizations in the social sector, as [NDN Collective](#), [IllumiNative](#), and the [Decolonizing Wealth Project](#) were all established by Indigenous entrepreneurs.³⁶ By 2022, NDN Collective alone had raised over \$177.5 million, much of which came from new funders who had never funded Indigenous-led organizations before and did so at unprecedented levels. NDN spent over \$71.3 million in program expenses from 2018 to 2022, much of which was regranted to other Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving organizations.³⁷

Furthermore, field leaders noted that a handful of existing Indigenous-led organizations experienced significant growth during this time period and increased their capacity to support other organizations in the field. Interviewees named the impact that [First Nations Development Institute](#), [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#), [Native Ways Federation](#), and [Seventh Generation Fund](#) had on other organizations in the landscape.³⁸ Specifically,

- First Nations Development Institute’s budget increased from \$7.5 million in 2018 to \$17.5 million in 2022, an increase of over 133%. During this same time period, the organization went from awarding 163 grants in 2018 to 410 in 2022, an increase of 152%.³⁹

³³ “On Our Terms: Supporting a Thriving Native Nonprofit Sector”; Native Ways Federation and Melvin Consulting 2024, <https://nativeways.app.neoncrm.com/forms/onourtermsreport>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Give Native: 2023 Native-Led Nonprofit Participants List,” Native Ways Federation, Accessed January 2024, <https://www.nativeways.org/givenativelist/>.

³⁶ Expert interview, Edgar Villanueva, Founder & CEO, Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital, Third Plateau, January 2024.

³⁷ “NDN Collective,” Candid: Guidestar, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/82-3776329>.

³⁸ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023–February 2024.

³⁹ “First Nations Development Institute,” Candid: Guidestar, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/54-1254491>.

- Native Americans in Philanthropy’s budget increased from \$1.6 million in 2018 to \$3.8 million in 2022, an increase of 138%. The organization’s coalition members also more than tripled from 38 in 2019 to 178 in 2021, an increase of 368%.⁴⁰
- Native Ways Federation grew from receiving less than \$50,000 in 2018 to a budget of \$354,000 in 2022, increasing by 608%.⁴¹
- Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.’s budget increased from \$2.7 million in 2018 to \$9.8 million in 2022, an increase of 263%.⁴²

Data Limitations in Measuring Foundation Giving

The preceding data on foundation giving to Native-led and Native-serving nonprofits is based on quantitative data from the IRS, which has many limitations. Currently available data can muddle the ability to track behavioral change in philanthropy, as it is difficult to identify the funding going to support Indigenous-led organizations and communities. While there has been some progress with projects like Investing in Native Communities and broader efforts to incorporate demographic information and leverage technology to better track where philanthropic dollars are going, there is still much room for improvement.

Funders and nonprofit leaders acknowledged efforts to better organize and leverage data by organizations like Candid and others in the field but also cautioned that currently available philanthropic funding data only tells part of the story. There are issues with how technology is used to identify grant recipients, what terminology is used, how organizations define leadership and accountability to Indigenous communities, and how current systems do not account for intermediary organizations.⁴³

With current realities of available data, funders and nonprofit leaders discussed how this can lead to overcounting, undercounting, and a general lack of nuanced understanding about the reach and impact of funds.⁴⁴ Some intermediary organizations (who both receive and distribute funding) are likely double counted across the field. On the other hand, another field leader discussed how the data is limited, as not all entities giving to Indigenous communities have the same reporting requirements, noting specific limitations with respect to cash gifts.⁴⁵

Increased Conversations and Awareness Among Funders

Along with discussions of how the nonprofit landscape has shifted, several philanthropic leaders shared that they have witnessed an increase in awareness and interest in giving to Indigenous communities among funders since 2018. However, they cautioned that conversations and interest do not always convert into dollars.

⁴⁰ “Native Americans in Philanthropy,” Candid: Guidestar, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/56-1849598>.

⁴¹ “Native Ways Federation,” Candid: Guidestar, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/32-0248892>.

⁴² “Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.” Candid: Guidestar, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/68-0027247>.

⁴³ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023-February 2024.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Expert interview, Jodi Archambault, nonprofit leader, Wend Collective, Third Plateau, April 2024.

Some interviewed leaders opined that this rise in discussion may have resulted in increased giving to Indigenous-led and serving organizations in the past few years. Others were more skeptical about how increased awareness translated funding.⁴⁶ According to Jason Franklin, founder & principal at Ktisis Capital, there is increased “interest in the number of gatherings – great turnout, but [funders are] not moving more money than they already were. [There is a] challenge of how to translate rising interest into increased funding.”⁴⁷

Some interviewees mentioned changing attitudes and approaches to funding Indigenous nonprofits. Edgar Villanueva shared that he has noticed shifts in language and an increased presence of an Indigenous worldview across the philanthropic sector.⁴⁸ Similarly, Rajasvini Bhansali, executive director of the Solidaire Network, echoed that she has seen more discussion around the importance of funding Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations.⁴⁹

Further, interviewees discussed how other established philanthropic organizations, such as [Thousand Currents](#), [Grassroots International](#), and [Solidaire](#) have advanced Indigenous funding education.⁵⁰ Educating funders is an important step in creating more awareness about Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations and how they operate.

Though there has been some progress through conversations with funders, interviews with field leaders underscored that there is still room for growth in representation of Indigenous communities in philanthropy.⁵¹ Field leaders discussed how the launch of more Indigenous-led organizations has grown the representation of Indigenous leaders in philanthropy. Additionally, Bhansali highlighted how having more Indigenous women in leadership roles in philanthropy has helped organizations be more responsive to community needs.⁵²

Field data also highlights a desperate need for increased Indigenous representation in philanthropy, with the percentage of respondents working in philanthropy who identified as Indigenous between 2018 and 2022 hovering around 1% and actually declining from 1.6% in 2018 to 0.9% in 2022.⁵³ The 2024 “Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report” by Native Americans in Philanthropy builds on this data, incorporating voices from Indigenous Peoples working in philanthropic foundations.⁵⁴ Many of those interviewed discussed the difficulties they faced in their journeys to become program officers and foundation staff. As well, they unanimously felt that more Indigenous individuals are needed in foundation staff, leadership, and board positions across the country.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, January-April 2024.

⁴⁷ Expert interview, Jason Franklin, nonprofit leader, Ktisis Capital, Third Plateau, January 2024.

⁴⁸ Expert interview, Edgar Villanueva, sector leader, Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital, Third Plateau, January 2024.

⁴⁹ Expert interview, Rajasvini Bhansali, nonprofit leader, Solidaire Network, Third Plateau, February 2024.

⁵⁰ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023-February 2024.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Expert interview, Rajasvini Bhansali, nonprofit leader, Solidaire Network, Third Plateau, February 2024.

⁵³ Tenaja Jordan and Lyle Matthew Kan, “Change Philanthropy, The 2022 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals Report,” December 2022, <https://changephilanthropy.org/dapp/2022-report/>.

⁵⁴ “Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals Report”, Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2024, [https://20951050.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/20951050/Reports/NAP-IPP-report-spring-2024\(web\).pdf](https://20951050.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/20951050/Reports/NAP-IPP-report-spring-2024(web).pdf).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Influx of Funding from the COVID-19 Pandemic & Racial Justice Responses

Field leaders shared observations that philanthropic giving and attention to Indigenous communities increased in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings of 2020.⁵⁶ This is backed by the quantitative data shared earlier in the report, which shows a 59.9% increase in giving to Native-led organizations between 2019 and 2020 (\$327.5 million to \$523.8 million).

Beginning in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities. CDC data demonstrates the inequitable impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities, with a rate of COVID-19 among Indigenous Peoples of more than 3.5 times that of non-Hispanic white people in the U.S.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbated mental health and financial stressors and disrupted community connection and critical cultural events.⁵⁸

In response to COVID-19, Indigenous organizations worked to bring attention to rising needs among their communities and opportunities to invest in an equitable recovery by directly supporting Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations. Edgar Villanueva shared how philanthropy took note of the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and wanted to move money to support Indigenous communities, but ran into challenges in doing so swiftly and effectively. This is where intermediary organizations such as the Decolonizing Wealth Project and movement infrastructure organizations like NDN played a significant role. Villanueva shared that these organizations “demonstrated that we could move money in the way that big philanthropy cannot – we saw funders come to us. I think that lifted up and influenced the sector. Native organizations know [the] community better, and can get money out quickly.”⁵⁹

Participants gather for morning circle at the Hesapa Action Camp in the Black Hills.
Photo by Richard Casteneda.



⁵⁶ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023–February 2024.

⁵⁷ “CDC data show disproportionate COVID-19 impact in American Indian/Alaska Native populations”, CDC, 2020; <https://archive.cdc.gov/#/details?url=https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0819-covid-19-impact-american-indian-alaska-native.html>.

⁵⁸ Rhitu Chatterjee, “Hit hard by COVID, Native Americans come together to protect families and elders,” NPR, November 24, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/11/24/1058675230/hit-hard-by-covid-native-americans-come-together-to-protect-families-and-elders>.

⁵⁹ Expert interview, Edgar Villanueva, nonprofit leader, Decolonizing Wealth Project and Liberated Capital, Third Plateau, January 2024.

In May 2020, the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department sparked a new wave of racial justice movements around the world that called on philanthropy to examine the inherent racism embedded in society and invest more heavily in organizations led by and serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

Field leaders, like Rajasvini Bhansali and Carly Bad Heart Bull, discussed how the murder of George Floyd and resulting protests led to a moment of increased racial equity conversation and investment to BIPOC-led organizations.⁶⁰ This claim is backed by philanthropic data, courtesy of Candid's Funding for Racial Equity tracker. Since the murder of George Floyd in 2020 through October 2023, 78,133 grants valued at \$16.8 billion have been earmarked for racial equity programs and general support for nonprofits doing this important work.⁶¹ The top funder for racial equity work according to Candid is MacKenzie Scott, with 175 grants totaling more than \$3.3 billion.⁶²

Though there has been more conversation about philanthropic giving to Indigenous communities and a slight increase in funding to these groups in 2020, many interviewees noted obstacles to converting this awareness to increased sustainable funding. While it is difficult to fully understand this challenge given limitations with currently available data, field leaders cast doubt on the extent to which philanthropic interest in Indigenous communities and racial justice causes would continue. A question remains about whether funders are committed to long-term behavior change and investments outside of the emergency response phase in response to COVID-19 and the racial equity momentum in 2020.⁶³

The Supreme Court cases SFFA v. Harvard and SFFA v. University of North Carolina, both decided in June 2023, struck down race-based admissions considerations and policies, commonly referred to as affirmative action.⁶⁴ While these rulings were limited to college admissions, they set a precedent for race-consciousness beyond universities, including in philanthropy. Of note, in September 2024, The Fearless Fund, which provides entrepreneurial grants to Black women, settled a lawsuit that claimed a grant contest was discriminatory. The Fund shared that settling the case helped avoid a court ruling that might impact broader minority-based funding.⁶⁵

However, Indigenous tribes under U.S. law are a special designation of government and political entities, not a racial classification.⁶⁶ This distinction is important in light of the recent case decisions against racial equity work. While funders may have to examine their racial equity work, funding for Indigenous

⁶⁰ Expert interview, Rajasvini Bhansali, nonprofit leader, Solidaire Network, Third Plateau, February 2024. And Expert interview, Carly Bad Heart Bull, nonprofit leader, Native Ways Federation, Third Plateau, March 2024.

⁶¹ "Funding for racial equity", Candid, Accessed June 2024; https://candid.org/explore-issues/racial-equity?_gl=1*sgl6k8*_ga*NjM1NTlyNjJwLjE2MTEyODQ5NTY.*_ga_5W8PXY_YGBX*MTYxMTg3NTA3OC4yLjAuMTYxMTg3NTA3OC4w#stats-chart.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Expert interview, Carly Bad Heart Bull, nonprofit leader, Native Ways Federation, Third Plateau, March 2024.

⁶⁴ "The Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Decision, Explained: SFFA v. Harvard and SFFA v. University of North Carolina FAQ"; Legal Defense Fund; Accessed June 2024; <https://www.naacpldf.org/case-issue/sffa-v-harvard-faq/>.

⁶⁵ Kiara Alfonseca, "Fearless Fund ends program for Black women, settling discrimination lawsuit," ABC News, September 11, 2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/fearless-fund-ends-program-black-women-settling-discrimination/story?id=113597707>.

⁶⁶ Indian Law Resource Center; "Tribes are governments, not racial classifications" <https://indianlaw.org/story/tribes-are-governments-not-racial-classifications>.

communities and Indigenous-led nonprofits does not technically fall within this category. Future studies should examine the impact of recent court decisions on philanthropic giving.

Increased Momentum in LANDBACK

Similarly to conversations around COVID-19 and racial justice, funders are increasingly interested in the LANDBACK movement, which seeks to restore Indigenous rights to land that was never ceded to, but rather taken extrajudicially by, the United States government. Since 2018, the LANDBACK movement has gained popularity and emerged as a vehicle to yield resources to Indigenous communities – though there is increased awareness around the movement, there are still challenges to widespread implementation.

Interviewees described that the LANDBACK campaign and hashtag gained momentum during the examined period of 2018–2022, influencing how philanthropy thinks about non-monetary donations, such as land, outside of traditional grantmaking dollars. Interviewees also noted that most donors are interested and involved in LANDBACK projects with a geographic proximity to where they are located and typically fund. Though the movement does not have the same sense of urgency as time-sensitive efforts such as Standing Rock and pipeline battles, funders and nonprofit leaders noted some donors are feeling increasingly comfortable with supporting the movement.⁶⁷ For example, the Berkeley City Council pledged to return two acres of land to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust in March 2024 as part of the LandBack movement.⁶⁸ The Sogorea Te' Land Trust also collects a voluntary Institutional Shuumi Land Tax in the East Bay area in order to acknowledge and help rectify that the land was stolen.⁶⁹

Though interest is growing, especially in collective efforts, interviews noted there is still limited infrastructure to carry out major LANDBACK work, scaling to a place that would be impactful for communities.⁷⁰ Further legal precedents and current courts often uphold U.S. government rights to control land. However, there have been some recent policy shifts that may facilitate increased LANDBACK efforts. In California, SB-18, 2004 recognizes tribes' role in conservation, protection, and stewardship, requiring tribal consultation. The 2020 Native American Ancestral Lands Policy, also largely focused on conservation, prioritizes tribal purchase and transfers and facilitates co-management of land.⁷¹

Evolution of Giving Vehicles to Indigenous Causes

Given the limitations of foundation giving data and trends in philanthropy outside of foundations, it is essential to also consider other giving vehicles. Between 2018–2022, several types of philanthropic giving other than foundations have emerged in support of Indigenous communities. This section of the report explores the following:

⁶⁷ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023–February 2024.

⁶⁸ “Exploring the why, what and hope in LandBack”; University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, Accessed June 2024, <https://ucanr.edu/News/?routeName=newsstory&postnum=58896>.

⁶⁹ “Institutional Shuumi Land Tax”; Sogorea Te' Land Trust led by Urban Indigenous Women; Accessed June 2024; <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/institutional-shuumi/>.

⁷⁰ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, conducted by Third Plateau. December 2023–February 2024.

⁷¹ “Exploring the why, what and hope in LandBack,” University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, March 20, 2024, <https://ucanr.edu/News/?routeName=newsstory&postnum=58896>.

- Increased high-net-worth individual giving to Indigenous causes;
- Continued growth of donor-advised funds (DAFs); and
- Promises and pitfalls of social bonds and pledges.

Although these three giving mechanisms are not the traditional methods of fundraising for many nonprofits, they have some notable advantages. While foundation gifts carry foundation requirements, and often come with heavy grant reporting requirements, gifts from individuals, DAFs, and social bonds are not necessarily beholden to the same regulations. Thus, funding from these sources can be more flexible in structure and reporting. Gifts of this kind also can come without the RFP and application processes that take time and effort for both the nonprofit and the foundation.

The downside of these types of giving is that they are often unpredictable or may be one-time gifts, as opposed to the structured, recurring grant cycles of foundations. Furthermore, smaller, less-known nonprofits might not have the connections to be on the radar of those making individual or DAF contributions.

Trends in High-Net-Worth Individual Giving to Indigenous Causes

An evolving source of giving to Indigenous communities and causes comes through individual gifts, with the rise of large donations from high-net-worth individuals like MacKenzie Scott. From 2018 to 2022, there have been shifts in individual giving, both with respect to focus areas of gifts and how individuals were giving on their own or through being involved with donor networks.

Forbes's list of "America's Most Generous Givers 2023: The Nation's 25 Top Philanthropists," examines trends in top philanthropists' giving areas. Top individual givers most frequently funded organizations focused on education, health, healthcare, and global health as well as poverty alleviation and science and medical research. A few philanthropists have demonstrated focus areas in criminal justice issues as well as climate change, conservation, and environment.⁷²

Though some named a focus on racial justice, few, if any, of the top philanthropists in the Forbes list had an explicit focus on Indigenous communities. However, some climate giving names the importance of working with Indigenous communities. Jeff Bezos's Bezos Earth Fund specifically focuses on environmental justice, convening coalitions to support Indigenous Peoples in tropical forest areas.⁷³ In addition to Jeff Bezos, top individual donors such as Gordon and Betty Moore and Michael Bloomberg are involved with the Protecting Our Planet Challenge, which pledges \$5 billion focused on biodiversity conservation and names the importance of collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and communities.⁷⁴ These giving efforts illustrate a trend that funders and nonprofit leaders spoke to – individual donors frequently increasingly give through donor networks, collaboratives, and pledges in addition to individually through their own portfolios.

⁷² "America's Most Generous Givers 2023: The Nation's 25 Top Philanthropists," *Forbes*, January 23, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeswealthteam/2023/01/23/americas-top-givers-2023-the-25-most-philanthropic-billionaires/?sh=2cdd11e32e9e>.

⁷³ "Environmental Justice," Bezos Earth Fund, Accessed April 2024, <https://www.bezosearthfund.org/our-programs/environmental-justice>.

⁷⁴ "Protecting our Planet Challenge," Protecting Our Planet Challenge, Accessed April 2024, <https://www.protectingourplanetchallenge.org/>.

Interviewees noted donors often join networks to be in community and highlighted an opportunity for education through these networks.⁷⁵

A noteworthy new donor in the ultra-high-net-worth individual category, MacKenzie Scott has been reshaping the individual giving landscape. Through Yield Giving, Scott has given more than \$17.3 billion to more than 2,300 organizations, as of April 2024.⁷⁶ Some of Scott's giving has had an explicit focus on Indigenous-led and serving organizations. **A review of publicly available Yield Giving data from 2020-2022⁷⁷ indicated that at least \$205,180,000 of that funding went to Indigenous- or Native-led or serving organizations.** Given that some recipient organizations, including NDN Collective, requested a disclosure delay, the actual funding amount to Indigenous communities is higher than this reported number.⁷⁸

In comparison, the \$205.18 million that Scott gave from 2020-2022 is almost a third of what all foundations in the U.S. gave to Indigenous organizations in the same time period. With foundation giving declining sharply from 2020-2022, this type of individual giving is crucial to help make up the gaps in funding for Indigenous nonprofits.

Continued Growth of Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)

Another emerging trend in giving outside of traditional foundation grants is the use of donor-advised funds (DAFs). In broader philanthropy, DAFs have grown as a giving vehicle, highlighting an opportunity for individuals to use DAFs to support Indigenous-led organizations as well as another potential data transparency challenge to track philanthropic dollars. A DAF is “a giving vehicle that donors can establish and fund by making irrevocable, tax-deductible contributions to the charitable sponsor.” DAFs are administered by charitable sponsors such as community foundations, single-issue charities, and national charities, including those affiliated with financial institutions.⁷⁹

DAF data from 2022 revealed continued growth of the giving vehicle in broader philanthropy. According to the National Philanthropic Trust's “The 2023 DAF Report”, grants from DAFs reached a new high in 2022, at \$52.16 billion.⁸⁰ In 2022, both grants and contributions related to DAFs saw a growth rate of approximately 9%, slightly less than previous year over year growth when there was increased activity related to the pandemic and racial justice. Total grants from DAFs in 2022 represented approximately 52.3% of the value of private foundation grants.⁸¹

Interviewees also noted the increase in broader trends in DAFs, sharing that anecdotally it seemed like there was more individual giving through DAFs, which could impact Indigenous communities and organizations. Relatedly, some observed a perceived shift into more of the DAF

⁷⁵ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023-February 2024.

⁷⁶ Yield Giving, Accessed March 2024, <https://yieldgiving.com/>.

⁷⁷ Note: Yield Giving data only goes back to 2019, which is why the year 2018 was omitted. No gifts to Indigenous-serving organizations are documented for 2019.

⁷⁸ Yield Giving, Accessed March 2024, <https://yieldgiving.com/>.

⁷⁹ “The 2023 DAF Report,” National Philanthropic Trust, 2023, <https://www.nptrust.org/reports/daf-report/>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

activity moving from community foundations to national charities affiliated with financial institutions and major philanthropic organizations.⁸²

Given the continued rise of DAFs, organizations are highlighting an opportunity for this giving vehicle to support Indigenous-led organizations. In the 2023 report “Being a Good Relative,” First Nations Development Institute highlighted an opportunity for donors and sponsors using DAFs to increase resources to “Native-controlled and -led nonprofits.”⁸³ While the benefits of DAFs are numerous, the downside is the lack of transparent data for tracking giving trends. This is a major limitation in the data for philanthropic giving, as DAFs do not have the same reporting requirements and public 990s as foundations. It is harder to trace exactly where and how much DAFs are giving to Indigenous-led organizations and communities.

Promise and Pitfalls of Social Bonds and Pledges

Alongside DAFs as an emerging vehicle for donations, social bonds are also on the rise. Recent years brought growth in the social bond market as well as philanthropic “pledges” to support specific social causes and communities. Despite the growth of these giving vehicles and surrounding conversations, there is some skepticism about continued commitments and the impact on intended communities.

While social bonds as a giving vehicle were not entirely novel, since 2020 there has been increased use of the tool to address racial equity and respond to community needs.⁸⁴ Social bond projects include: LISC’s [Project 10X](#) intended to address “racial health, wealth and opportunity gaps,” [U.S. Bank and Enterprise Community Partners](#) announcement of a \$30 million racial equity focused bond in 2021,⁸⁵ and the [Ford Foundation](#)’s announcement of \$1 billion in social bonds to support communities hit hard by the pandemic.⁸⁶

Many social bonds took a broad lens to racial equity, focusing on communities of color and historic inequities. Some specified specific issues facing Black communities, but few U.S.-focused reviewed social bonds named Indigenous communities. Some Canadian social bonds did have an explicit focus on Indigenous communities, including a 2019 social impact bond focused on the health and well-being of Indigenous mothers and babies.⁸⁷

⁸² “Investing in Native Communities: Philanthropic Funding for Native Americans and Communities;” Native Americans and Philanthropy and Candid, 2019, https://www.issuelab.org/resources/35493/35493.pdf?download=true&_ga=2.56827946.1209014558.1604941390-1925363.1604941390.

⁸³ Eileen Egan, Raymond Foxworth, Ph.D., and Daryl Melvin, P.E., “Being a Good Relative: A Guide for Individuals and Organizations to Support Native-Led and -Controlled Initiatives” First Nations Development Institute and Melvin Consulting PLLC, 2023, <https://www.firstnations.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Being-A-Good-Relative-report.pdf>.

⁸⁴ Annie Donovan & Anna Smukowski, “Social Bonds and Racial Equity: The “S” Gains Prominence in ESG,” LISC, March 4, 2022, <https://www.lisc.org/our-stories/story/social-bonds-and-racial-equity-the-s-gains-prominence-in-esg/>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Ford Foundation Announces Sale and Pricing of Landmark \$1 Billion Social Bonds,” Ford Foundation, June 23, 2020, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/news-and-press/news/ford-foundation-announces-sale-and-pricing-of-landmark-1-billion-social-bonds/>.

⁸⁷ Adam Jagekewski, “Social impact bond aims to start Indigenous children on the right path,” MaRS, June 25, 2019, <https://www.marsdd.com/news/social-impact-bond-aims-to-start-indigenous-children-on-the-right-path/>.

Globally, social bond issuance peaked in 2021, after a jump in 2020. Reliant on investor interest and market conditions, such as interest rates, the future of social bonds remains unclear. According to 2023 market data, much of the global social bond market is in Europe, though 15% of the market was in U.S. dollars.⁸⁸

In addition to a rise in social bonds, recent years also saw philanthropic organizations starting and participating in pledges and funds focused on racial justice, especially at the intersection of climate and racial justice. For example:

- [COP 26 Fund](#): In 2021, at COP 26, governments and funders pledged to invest \$1.7 million to support Indigenous Peoples and communities protecting the planet from climate change.⁸⁹
- [The Climate Funders Justice Pledge \(CFJP\)](#): In 2021, the Donors of Color Network launched a project aimed to shift major climate funders to give at least 30% of their climate funding to BIPOC-led power building groups. In the Pledge's first two years, more than \$60 million in new funding went to climate nonprofits led by people of color.⁹⁰
- [Tribal Nations Conservation Pledge](#): In 2022, Native Americans in Philanthropy announced a pledge and fund focused on philanthropy investing directly in tribally-led conservation work. Donors involved in the pledge include the Christensen Fund, which pledged 25% of its U.S. giving and provided a \$1 million seed donation. Other foundations involved in the pledge include The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Re:Wild, Indigenous Earth Fund, and the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples.

Though recent years have seen more funds that explicitly name a needed shift to directly support Indigenous-led efforts, there are still questions and limitations about how much of that funding is actually making it to Indigenous-led organizations working on the frontlines.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Roel van Broekhuizen, "Social Bonds Bounce Back As New Issuers Strengthen Global Market Momentum," January 15, 2024, <https://www.gsam.com/content/gsam/uk/en/advisers/market-insights/gsam-insights/2024/social-bonds-bounce-back.html>.

⁸⁹ "Governments and private funders announce historic US\$1.7 billion pledge at COP26 in support of Indigenous Peoples and local communities," Ford Foundation, November 1, 2021, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/news-and-press/news/governments-and-private-funders-announce-historic-us1-7-billion-pledge-at-cop26-in-support-of-indigenous-peoples-and-local-communities/>.

⁹⁰ "Climate Justice Pledge wins new commitments, but more funders are needed," January 2023, <https://kresge.org/news-views/climate-justice-pledge-wins-new-commitments-but-more-funders-are-needed/>.

⁹¹ Michael Kavate, "More Funding is Flowing to Support Indigenous Peoples. How Much Is Making it to the Front Lines?" *Inside Philanthropy*, January 24, 2024, <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2024-1-24-more-funding-is-flowing-to-support-indigenous-peoples-how-much-is-making-it-to-the-front-lines#:~:text=How%20Much%20Is%20Making%20it%20to%20the%20Front%20Lines%3F,-Michael%20Kavate%20%7C%20January&text=More%20philanthropic%20dollars%20than%20seemingly.land%20rights%20in%20tropical%20forests>.

Shifts in Approaches to Giving to Indigenous Causes

The shifts away from foundation grants to other sources of funding, like individual gifts, DAFs, and social bonds, echo a broader movement towards less restrictive funding and reporting requirements in philanthropy. This section highlights two shifts in approaches to giving that help lessen the burden on the nonprofit receiving funding:

- Moving from program support to general operating support; and
- Intersectional funding.

Moving From Program Support to General Operating Support

The importance of sovereignty when working with Indigenous communities cannot be understated, especially given the historical and ongoing colonial oppression of Indigenous Peoples. **Part of sovereignty involves trust and recognition of lived experiences, which in philanthropic terms translates to general operating support and long-term, low touch grants.**

Native Ways Federation’s “On Our Terms: Supporting a Thriving Native Nonprofit Sector” report featuring the voices of Indigenous nonprofit leaders highlights exactly this point, stating that “for Native nonprofits to make visible impacts, they need to define success on their own terms, and have the resources and space to ideate. In this way, structural inequities can be reframed to invest resources to support a thriving Native nonprofit sector based on Native values.”⁹² Seeking to answer the question of what a thriving Native nonprofit looks like, the report explores the themes of “living our values, relationships and interconnectedness, self-determination, adaptability and capacity building, and financial resources.”⁹³ A pivotal conclusion of the report is that foundations must recognize that Indigenous organizations know what their communities need, have their own ways of providing services on their own terms, are experts in their work, and would be best supported by general operating grants with fewer restrictions and requirements. The report goes on to suggest more support for Native-led funding models and acknowledging that much of foundations wealth, especially private family foundations, comes from extracting resources from stolen Indigenous lands.⁹⁴

Intersectional Funding

Funders and nonprofit leaders described how philanthropic giving to Indigenous communities and causes often is at the intersection of other issues such as climate, democracy, and health.⁹⁵ With respect to democracy funding, in particular, there have been questions around the boom and bust cycles of this giving and to what extent the funding supports sustainable community organizing with Indigenous communities or is more transactional in furtherance of election cycle goals.⁹⁶

⁹² “On Our Terms: Supporting a Thriving Native Nonprofit Sector”; Native Ways Federation and Melvin Consulting; 2024; <https://nativeways.app.neoncrm.com/forms/onourtermsreport>.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Funder and nonprofit leader interviews, Third Plateau, December 2023-February 2024.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Additionally, some smaller civically-focused organizations have emerged in the past few years with particular growth focused on the Native vote as well as bringing together Black and Indigenous organizing.⁹⁷

While community organizing, democracy, health, and environmental programs often operate separately from each other and from funders' Indigenous programs, there is intersectionality with ongoing Indigenous work that could be better explored by funders. These issues are all connected with Indigenous-serving work, not separate.

Challenges and Opportunities

When considering the shifts and trends in philanthropic giving from 2018-2022, several challenges and opportunities arise that affect Indigenous nonprofits, funders, and the field in general. The major challenges and opportunities from the research presented in this report are listed below.

Challenges

- 1. Indigenous Peoples are still underrepresented in foundation giving compared to the percentage of the population they represent.** The percentage of foundation grant dollars going to Native communities was 0.44% in 2022, but census data indicates American Indians and Alaska Natives make up 2.9% of the population. Beyond fighting for parity with the population percentage, it must also be taken into account that many foundations exist because of wealth extracted from unceded Indigenous lands. Indigenous communities on Turtle Island have faced centuries of oppression and harms perpetrated by colonizers. Philanthropy should be seeking to repair these injustices through more than just parity with the current U.S. population. Indigenous Peoples are also underrepresented in foundation staffing and leadership, which could be one reason inequities persist despite some progress.
- 2. Conversations and awareness-building about Indigenous Peoples are helping, but we also need to go beyond these tactics to see ecosystem-level changes.** While leaders in this field have experienced changes in the number and tone of conversations with funders that are moving in the right direction, foundations are still not funding Native communities equitably. This is despite unprecedented levels of funding for a handful of new and existing Indigenous-led organizations. Creating sustained, equitable funding for Indigenous-led organizations in the field of philanthropy will require more than funder education and conversations. There is still significant work to do in this field to shift philanthropic control, change the power and decision-making balances, and move beyond educating funders.
- 3. There remains a sense of competition across Indigenous organizations, rather than a solidarity or sense of collective abundance.** Even though funding increased in the field overall, Indigenous nonprofits are trapped in a mindset of competition. Leaders in the space noted that there is a sense that funders have their favorite organizations to give to

⁹⁷ Expert interview, Jason Franklin, nonprofit leader, Ktisis Capital, Third Plateau, January 2024.

and do not branch out to find other organizations. Similarly, there is a sense of gatekeeping in the field, rather than information sharing and networking. Competition inhibits shared learning and information sharing across the field, which can end up hurting organizations when they could be helping each other.

- 4. Data limitations and variations in definitions make it difficult to understand the full picture.** There is a lack of consistency across organizations in defining what it means to be Indigenous-led, rather than Indigenous-serving. Further, there is a lack of publicly available data to track funding to and from mechanisms outside of traditional foundation grants reported in 990 filings. Missing data includes fiscally sponsored projects, DAFs, social bonds, stock options, individual giving, and more. The lack of data limits our ability to analyze and report on the state of the field as a whole.

Opportunities

- 1. Apply more pressure to move funders from conversations to action and create mechanisms to hold them accountable.** Although conversations and funder education have helped increase funding overall, holding funders accountable for making these changes is essential. Asking funders for pledges or other forms of commitments with accountability could help move foundations from the consideration phase to the action phase of grantmaking to Indigenous nonprofits.
- 2. Focus on giving outside of institutional philanthropy (individuals, DAFs, pooled funds).** While institutional philanthropic grants remain inequitable for Indigenous-serving organizations, other options exist for nonprofit funding that are on the rise. Individual giving, DAFs, and other mechanisms provide opportunities for unrestricted funding to organizations. These also usually come without the intense reporting requirements and application processes associated with foundation grants.
- 3. Demonstrate the impact and benefits that come with unrestricted funding to Indigenous organizations and recognize the expertise of those with lived experiences in the challenges they are working to solve and opportunities they are working to unlock.** Trust-based philanthropy means recognizing the sovereignty of organizations to control their funding and programs. While more foundations are shifting towards trust-based philanthropy and more unrestricted funding, it is important for Indigenous organizations to demonstrate the impact and success of such funding. Continuing to drive the narrative around what is possible with unrestricted funding can help push the field towards more of this type of giving.
- 4. Increase collaboration and championing across Indigenous organizations, supporting and uplifting each other.** Indigenous nonprofits should resist falling into the colonizer mindset of competing for a “slice of the pie,” and instead band together and recognize that more can be accomplished from collaboration than competition. Organizations can share networking opportunities, recommend each other for funding, and share data that will benefit other organizations outside of their own as well as the field as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

Based on the data and information presented in this report, NDN Collective offers the following recommendations for the field of philanthropy to inspire changes at a systems level.

1. Understand and fund Indigenous self-determination and accountability.

Non-Indigenous Peoples have a lot of influence in Indigenous-serving organizations. NDN Collective defines Indigenous-led organizations as those with 100% Indigenous boards of directors/decision-makers and 70% Indigenous staff, and we are dedicated to finding and developing the knowledge and expertise needed to do our work within our own communities. Other organizations define Native-led organizations as those with 51% Native leadership. While there is not an agreed upon definition among Indigenous and Native-led organizations (or [BIPOC-led organizations more broadly](#)), it is crucial for funders to understand the importance of funding organizations that center self-determination and accountability for Indigenous Peoples.

NDN Collective's definition⁹⁸ intentionally excludes organizations that claim to serve Indigenous Peoples without Indigenous leadership, governance, decision-making, staff, or accountability. These organizations perpetuate cycles of white supremacy and take resources from the very people they claim to serve. Philanthropy can play a role by making sure the organizations they invest in who claim to be working for Indigenous Peoples are also led by and accountable to us.

2. Understand and fund movement infrastructure - the resources, skills, and people that support the entire movement ecosystem of organizations, networks, and leaders.⁹⁹

One single organization or organizer is not going to solve the intersecting challenges of our time - it will take a constellation of people, organizations, networks, campaigns, Nations, and communities. Funders must continue to fund Indigenous-led organizations that are led by and accountable to Indigenous communities, while also funding movement infrastructure organizations capable of moving resources to these groups over the long-term.

NDN Collective is designed to be not just an organization or a one-time fund, but long-term infrastructure for the Indigenous Peoples movement that moves money, resources, and support to the ecosystem of people and mechanisms doing the grassroots work on the ground in a way that is adaptive and responsive to the evolving needs of our communities and centers Indigenous self-determination. We must sustain funding for the infrastructure we have created to ensure that those closest to the challenges are able to organize and drive change in their communities for generations to come and create a world that is just and equitable for all people and Mother Earth.

⁹⁸ "Who We Fund", NDN Collective, <https://ndncollective.org/who-we-fund/>.

⁹⁹ Loh, Penn, "How Foundations Can Co-Create Movement Infrastructure", Nonprofit Quarterly, February 6, 2024. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-foundations-can-co-create-movement-infrastructure/>.

- 3. Integrate Indigenous-led organizations across your portfolios and be a good funding relative.** Continue to educate yourself about Indigenous work happening *across* your program areas, not just within an Indigenous portfolio, and connect with local Indigenous organizations and organizers to learn more about work happening in the lands you occupy. Don't check the box by having one 'anchor' Indigenous organization in your portfolio, but rather think holistically about what Indigenous-led organizations can bring to all of your funding areas - from education to health to affordable housing. Approach your learning with reciprocity. Fund as you learn and fairly compensate the people and organizations sharing their knowledge. Fund in ways that support Indigenous sovereignty by giving unrestricted, general operating funds and using a trust-based approach; and deepen your understanding of the value and benefit Indigenous Peoples bring to all people and Mother Earth.

Andrew Iron shell participates in an art build with his son and grandson. Photo by Angel White Eyes.



A CALL FOR RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

To resource Indigenous Peoples at the levels required to repair generations of harm and build the future we know is possible will require a fundamental shift in the way philanthropic resources are distributed. We recognize and celebrate the small but significant shifts we have been able to contribute to since our founding, and see the recommendations above as fuel for continued progress. But we know that they are not enough.

In 2025, NDN Collective will launch an Indigenous Giving Pledge, where we will ask philanthropists big and small to commit 10% of their philanthropic assets to organizations that center Indigenous self-determination and are accountable to Indigenous communities.

Increased conversation and battling over less than 1% of giving will not create the change we know is possible for our peoples and Mother Earth. Following the lead of Secretary Deb Haaland’s challenge to philanthropy to commit 10% of total giving to projects in Indian Country,¹⁰⁰ **we will ask philanthropists to sign on to a public pledge to support organizations with accountability to the Indigenous communities they serve, and hold them accountable to their commitment.**

Beyond getting us to parity based on the size of our population in the colonial U.S. borders (2.9% according to the 2020 Census)¹⁰¹, we recognize that our communities and efforts benefit all living things - and believe we should be resourced accordingly. We are tired of performative activism from philanthropy and need to be able to track the flow of resources back to the original stewards of the land upon which the majority of wealth in the United States was created.

We have seen a failure of imagination from philanthropy - and we invite those willing to walk alongside us to dream bigger and create a world we all know is possible, where all peoples and Mother Earth thrive.

¹⁰⁰ “Readout of White House Roundtable on Increasing Tribal Access to Capital”; The White House; March 2024; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/03/01/readout-of-white-house-roundtable-on-increasing-tribal-access-to-capital/#:~:text=The%20Fund%20seeks%20to%20raise.Indian%20Country%2C%20particulary%20Native%20CDFIs.>

¹⁰¹ “Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census”; United States Census Bureau; August 2021; <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.