First Nations Development Institute

Investing in Native Youth

Grantmaking Trends from the Native Youth and Culture Fund 2015-2017

Native Youth and Culture Fund

A Program of First Nations Development Institute

First Nations Development Institute

Acknowledgements

First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) launched the Native Youth and Culture Fund (NYCF) in 2002 with generous support from the Kalliopeia Foundation. The NYCF is designed to enhance spiritual, cultural and language awareness, and promote youth empowerment, leadership and community building. Through year-end 2017, First Nations has awarded 378 grants through the program, totaling $6.33 million. The NYCF continues to be one of our most popular grant opportunities. We acknowledge that this important work could not be supported in Native communities without the generous support of the Kalliopeia Foundation, Susan A. and Donald P. Babson Charitable Foundation, and other tribal, corporate and individual supporters. We thank these organizations and individuals, but acknowledge that the content presented in this report is that of the authors alone, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funding entities mentioned. We also thank all the communities that have applied for the NYCF funding opportunity and demonstrated to us the importance and need for funding Native youth programs, as well as your commitment to investing in the next generation of leaders in Indian Country.

This report was written by the following First Nations Development Institute staff members: Kendall Tallmadge, Lead Grants Officer; Sarah Hernandez, Communications Officer; Abi Whiteing, Program Officer; Catherine Bryan, Director of Programs, Strengthening Tribal & Community Institutions; and Raymond Foxworth, Vice President of Grantmaking, Development and Communications. They also express their deepest thanks to all the NYCF applicants over the years, as they have made this report possible.

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For more information, please call (303) 774-7836 or email info@firstnations.org

"Native youth are the future of Indian Country. They are essential to reaching the vision of strong, resilient, prosperous tribal nations. This is the critical time to partner with tribal nations and invest in the success of all our youth."

– 2014 Native Youth Report, Executive Office of the President

Introduction

First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) firmly believes that Native youth are one of the most important assets for Native communities. Native youth are future leaders with the potential to positively impact our tribal communities on many different levels: culturally, politically, economically and spiritually.

First Nations invests in Native youth and their families through many programs, and the cornerstone of our youth efforts has long been the Native Youth and Culture Fund (NYCF). The NYCF, largely supported by the Kalliopeia Foundation, annually provides grant support to numerous youth-related projects that promote Native youth empowerment and active participation in Native cultures, languages and traditions.

The NYCF is one of First Nations' most popular grant opportunities. Through year-end 2017, First Nations has awarded 378 grants through the program, totaling $6.33 million to tribes and Native-led organizations committed to educating, empowering and engaging Native youth. Although these numbers are impressive, this report and other reports indicate that we are still just scratching the surface when it comes to supporting Native youth and Native youth programming.

In 2015, First Nations released *Investing in Native Youth: Grantmaking Trends from the Native Youth and Culture Fund*, a financial trends analysis examining five years of grantmaking activities through the NYCF from 2010 to 2014. This report explored trends related to the number and dollar amount of requests, the types of organizations requesting funding, regional variances, and key program areas identified by applicants. These financial trends revealed that grant requests for the NYCF typically increased annually, both in the number of grant applicants and in the amount of dollars requested, while NYCF funding availability remained at $400,000.[1] During this period, First Nations was able to meet only 11 percent of funding requests for Native youth programs, meaning that 89 percent of applicants were left without funding.[2]

1 *Investing in Native Youth: Grantmaking Trends from the Native Youth and Culture Fund*, pg. 8

2 Ibid., pg. 2

First Nations published *Investing in Native Youth* as part of the organization's pledge to the Obama Administration's Gen-I Challenge, a call to action that focused on improving the lives of Native youth through new investments and increased engagement. One of Gen-I's main goals was to promote a national dialogue and policies and programs to mobilize and cultivate the next generation of Native leaders, with a particular emphasis on education, economic development and mental health.

According to the White House's *2014 Native Youth Report,* "Native children are far more likely than their non-Native peers to grow up in poverty, to suffer from severe health problems, and to face obstacles to educational opportunity." This report also strongly emphasized that "these conditions are systemic and severe, and must be addressed through increased resources and strategic action."[3] Primarily, the White House report called for increased financial support of tribes and other community-based organizations, as these entities are already "making meaningful and often transformative differences in the lives of their children."[4] Despite this call to action, First Nations' research indicates that many Native youth programs and projects are still significantly underfunded.

As noted in the Native Americans in Philanthropy report, *Indigenous Lifecourse: Strengthening the Health and Well-Being of Native Youth*, today there are 2.1 million American Indian/Alaska Natives under the age of 24 living in the United States, and these youth face many challenges including:

- 32.4% of American Indian/Alaska Native youth live in poverty.
- 75% of deaths among American Indian/Alaska Native youth involve violence, including intentional injuries, homicide and suicide.
- 22% of American Indian/Alaska Native youth age 12 and older report alcohol use.
- 15% of American Indian/Alaska Native youth are involved in gang activity.

3 *2014 Native Youth Report*, pg.

4 Ibid., pg. 4

But First Nations believes that programmatic interventions developed by and for Native people, based in culture, place, language and spirituality, can build positive youth identity and esteem and can result in other positive outcomes for Native youth and Native communities as a whole.

This new report, *Investing in Native Youth: Grantmaking Trends from the Native Youth and Culture Fund 2015-2017*, provides an update on First Nations' NYCF grantmaking activities and trends for the years 2015 to 2017. Since the original report was released, First Nations has awarded an additional 73 grants through the NYCF, totaling more than $1.3 million, and serving more than 7,700 Native youth.

The number of grants awarded dwindles in comparison to the 571 requests received, totaling more than $10.38 million. These numbers reveal that we are still able to fund only 12.5 percent of funding requests for Native youth programming, which is a slight increase from the approximately 11 percent we funded in previous years. These numbers are a small step in the right direction, but there is still much more funding needed to adequately support Native youth and Native youth programming.

The goal of this new report is to share NYCF grantmaking activities over the past three years, and compare these statistics with the original report in order to document continued trends and/or changes related to the status of funding youth programs in Indian Country. In addition to shedding more light on these financial trends, this report also emphasizes that Native-controlled nonprofits play a critical role in administering youth-based programs and activities that have the potential to inspire young tribal leaders and transform their communities. Regardless, most Native youth programs exist in the face of very little philanthropic support, few full-time staff members and a cadre of volunteer support.

Despite limited resources and funding, many tribes, community-based organizations and Native-controlled nonprofits are developing innovative, culturally-based youth programs and projects that play a critical role in Native communities by empowering Native youth and giving them the tools and resources they need to overcome many of life's challenges. This report, and the previous *Investing in Native Youth: Grantmaking Trends from the Native Youth and Culture Fund,* celebrates several community partners and their accomplishments, emphasizing that there is ample opportunity to support Native youth by investing in Native organizations that are wholeheartedly committed to creating opportunities for youth development and advancement.

The NYCF Application Process

Since 2002, First Nations, with the generous support of our philanthropic partners, has awarded $6.33 million through the NYCF to support a wide variety of programs and projects, ranging from entrepreneurial and business skills classes to language and culture camps.

The data in this report are from an analysis of 571 NYCF applications from 2015 to 2017. On an annual basis, First Nations releases a competitive, two-stage national request for proposals (RFP). Applicants first submit an abbreviated application. These applications are screened through First Nations' review process and evaluated based on their alignment with the NYCF priority areas and grant-selection criteria. The four priority funding areas for the NYCF are:

- Preserving, strengthening or renewing cultural and/or spiritual practices, beliefs and values.
- Engaging both youth and elders in activities that demonstrate methods for documenting traditional knowledge, practices and/or beliefs, where culturally appropriate.
- Increasing youth leadership and their capacity to lead through integrated educational or mentoring programs.
- Increasing access to and sharing of cultural customs and beliefs through the use of appropriate technologies (traditional and/or modern) as a means of reviving or preserving tribal language, arts, history or other culturally-relevant topics.

Each year, First Nations narrows the candidate pool to approximately 40 applicants who align with one or more of the NYCF priorities and also meet the following criteria: demonstrate innovative and comprehensive activities; have a clear focus on building healthier communities through preserving, strengthening or renewing Native culture and cultural traditions among youth; demonstrate the ability and/or experience necessary to accomplish the project; have a clear plan of action, specific goals and objectives, and a process to periodically assess, document and disseminate progress and lessons learned; are feasible, cost-effective and sustainable; form partnerships and/or engage broad community participation and support; and have potential for application and replication in other Native communities. First Nations also encourages programming to be youth-driven or designed to promote active youth involvement in the project. These 40 applicants are invited to submit full proposals further detailing their proposed projects, activities and goals. Those invited to submit full proposals have about a 50 percent chance of being funded through the NYCF.

Major Findings

First Nations' goal in reporting updated information about our NYCF program is to renew our call to action around the needs of Native-led programs that serve Native youth across Indian Country. This report provides a snapshot of grantmaking activities during the 2015 to 2017 Native Youth and Culture Fund periods. This data highlight the following:

- ***The NYCF program reaches a broad number of Native communities across the United States.*** First Nations granted over $1.3 million to Native communities spanning 25 states and reaching over 7,700 youth. NYCF-funded projects vary in size and scope, from investing heavily in a handful of youth to serving upward of 200 youth through large-scale camps and similar events. The request for proposals alone received over 570 responses from 42 states.
- ***Despite national efforts, Native youth programs continue to be underfunded.*** During the three-year period of this analysis, First Nations was able to fund only 12.5 percent of funding requests. This underscores the tremendous need for increased philanthropy aimed at Native youth programs, which could easily be doubled or even tripled on a national level.
- ***Projects incorporating ceremonial, spiritual and traditional knowledge and activities continue to be a top priority for Native youth programs*** along with multi-generational learning and mentoring. Meanwhile, projects including youth leadership and empowerment, education and peer learning are on the rise.
- ***Native nonprofits continue to be major leaders in providing programming and activities for Native youth.*** Tribes are also active in seeking outside funds for youth programming, but the majority of NYCF requests are from Native nonprofits. Almost half of these nonprofits are less than 10 years old and over one-quarter are less than five years old.

Innovation and Impact

Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe's Summer Camps Teach Culture, Language and History

By Mary K. Bowannie

In 2016, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe of Nixon, Nevada, received a Native Youth and Culture Fund (NYCF) grant for $20,000 to host a summer camp for Paiute youth to learn the Paiute culture and heritage through a language-immersion unit. The sharing of the Paiute culture, language and history included hands-on learning and classroom activities. Tribal high school and college students served as peer mentors to their younger, fellow tribal members.

Through the NYCF grant, the cultural camp was able to provide transportation for all three of the tribe's communities. The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (PLPT) Reservation is located 45 miles northeast of Reno, Nevada, in Washoe County. PLPT has three communities: Nixon, Wadsworth and Sutcliffe. The communities of Wadsworth and Sutcliffe are located approximately 15 miles from Nixon, which was the location of the Cultural Summer Day Camp.

The cultural camp's ability to provide transportation sparked an interest from many families and supported an increase in attendance. Over the four weeks in July 2016, there was an average daily attendance of 73 students, which was an increase from the previous year's average daily attendance of 60 to 65 students.

Tribal elders were key to the success of the cultural camp and they served as consultants to the program. One of the elders who served as one of the language teachers was Flora Greene.

"We were very fortunate that one of our oldest elders, who is 100 years old, came and worked with and spoke to the students. Parents also came and watched as the students learned," said Janet Davis, Tribal Recreation Coordinator.

The youth were taught traditional Paiute dances and songs and they learned to make their own traditional clothing. The tribal museum director spoke to the students and showed them the

different parts of the regalia, such as the moccasins, collars, beaded belts, headbands and cloth and buckskin dresses. Tribal members who sew traditional clothing also came together to measure each student for their own traditional Paiute cloth dress or shirt. They also helped cut the fabric as well.

The key to the language-immersion program was the learning of the "NUMU" language by playing traditional games and songs. The students also learned to make hand-game pieces to use when playing hand games such as the Bamboo Game. The students learned NUMU words by repeating simple words, phrases and body parts. Elders and community members played bingo games with the children using NUMU words. They also told stories in both Paiute and English.

Davis said the impact of the camp is ongoing. "With the First Nations grant funding, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe was able to successfully serve youth and community members from all three of our tribal communities. This increased the access and sharing of our Paiute cultural customs and beliefs, and renewed our culture in the ways of our ancestors in order to promote our identity for future generations. The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe is very thankful to the First Nations Native Youth and Culture Fund for the support of this project."

Data and Trends 2015-2017

From 2015 to 2017, First Nations received a total of 571 proposals totaling more than $10.38 million in requests through the NYCF. In comparison, First Nations was able to provide only $1.3 million in funding. In 2015, First Nations received 217 proposals totaling $3,925,290. In 2016, First Nations received 217 proposals totaling $3,885,188, and, in 2017, First Nations received 137 proposals totaling $2,574,392. The total requests received during these three funding cycles was 571 grants totaling $10,384,870 (see **Figure 1**).

Similar to previous years, First Nations was unable to meet the full funding demand (see **Figure 2**). First Nations funded approximately 1 in 10 requests during 2015 and 2016, or 11.3% of total requested funding in 2015 and 11.1% in 2016. In 2017, First Nations funded approximately 1 in 8 requests, or 16.6% of total requested funding. This was coupled with an overall drop in the number of funding requests received. On average, First Nations was able to meet 12.5% of total funding requests for Native youth programs during this three-year funding cycle. This is a slight improvement from the original report, in which only 11% of total funding requests were met between 2010 and 2014.

It is unknown why the number of requests fell in 2017. The number of requests also fell in 2014 after steadily increasing the previous four years, dropping from a high of 280 applications in 2013 to 171 applications in 2014. Factors such as RFP language, media distribution and technical assistance for the application process stayed relatively the same over the three-year period from 2015 to 2017. However, the 2017 application period was shorter by approximately 1.5 weeks. Therefore, the drop in applications could be attributed to factors such as the timing of the RFP, the history of competitiveness and "application fatigue." Further research is needed to determine the exact reason for a decline in number of requests.

Figure 1: Total Requests 2015-2017

# of Grant Requests	571
$ Amount Requested	$ 10,384,870
Total Grants Provided	$ 1,302,905
Unmet Need	$ 9,081,920

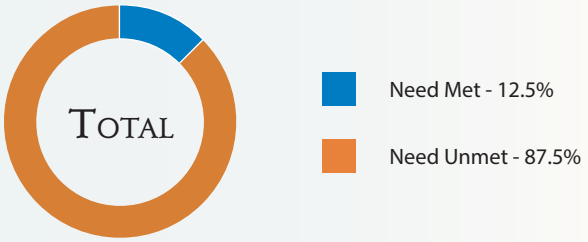
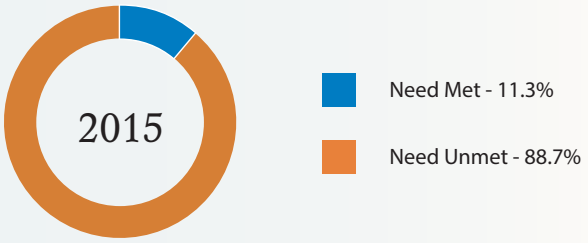
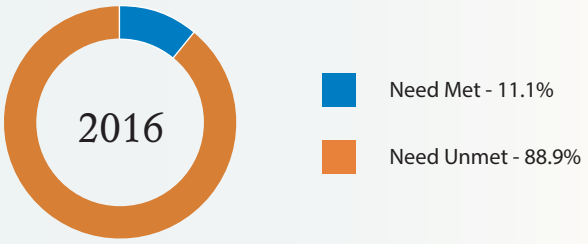


Figure 2: Grants Requests by Year (Requests and Unmet Need)

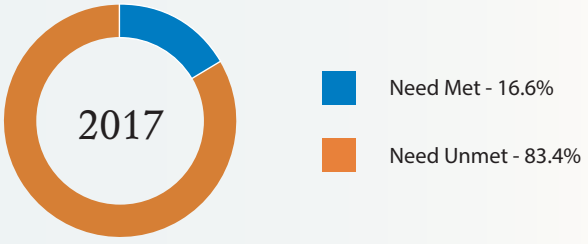
# of Grant Requests	217
$ Amount Requested	$ 3,925,290
Total Grants Provided	$ 444,250
Unmet Need	$ 3,481,040



# of Grant Requests	217
$ Amount Requested	$ 3,885,188
Total Grants Provided	$ 432,000
Unmet Need	$ 3,453,188



# of Grant Requests	137
$ Amount Requested	$ 2,574,392
Total Grants Provided	$ 426,700
Unmet Need	$ 2,147,692



Geographic Concentration of Funding Requests[5]

In the previous report based on numbers from 2010 through 2014, the majority of funding requests came from the Northwest region, followed by the Southwest and Northern Plains regions, respectively. The breakdown of regional requests for the period of 2010 through 2014 was as follows

Region	Number of requests
Northwest	204
Southwest	193
Northern Plains	166
Pacific	107
Alaska	80
Southern Plains	72
Midwest	65
Northeast	51
Hawaii	38
Southeast	23
Total	**999**

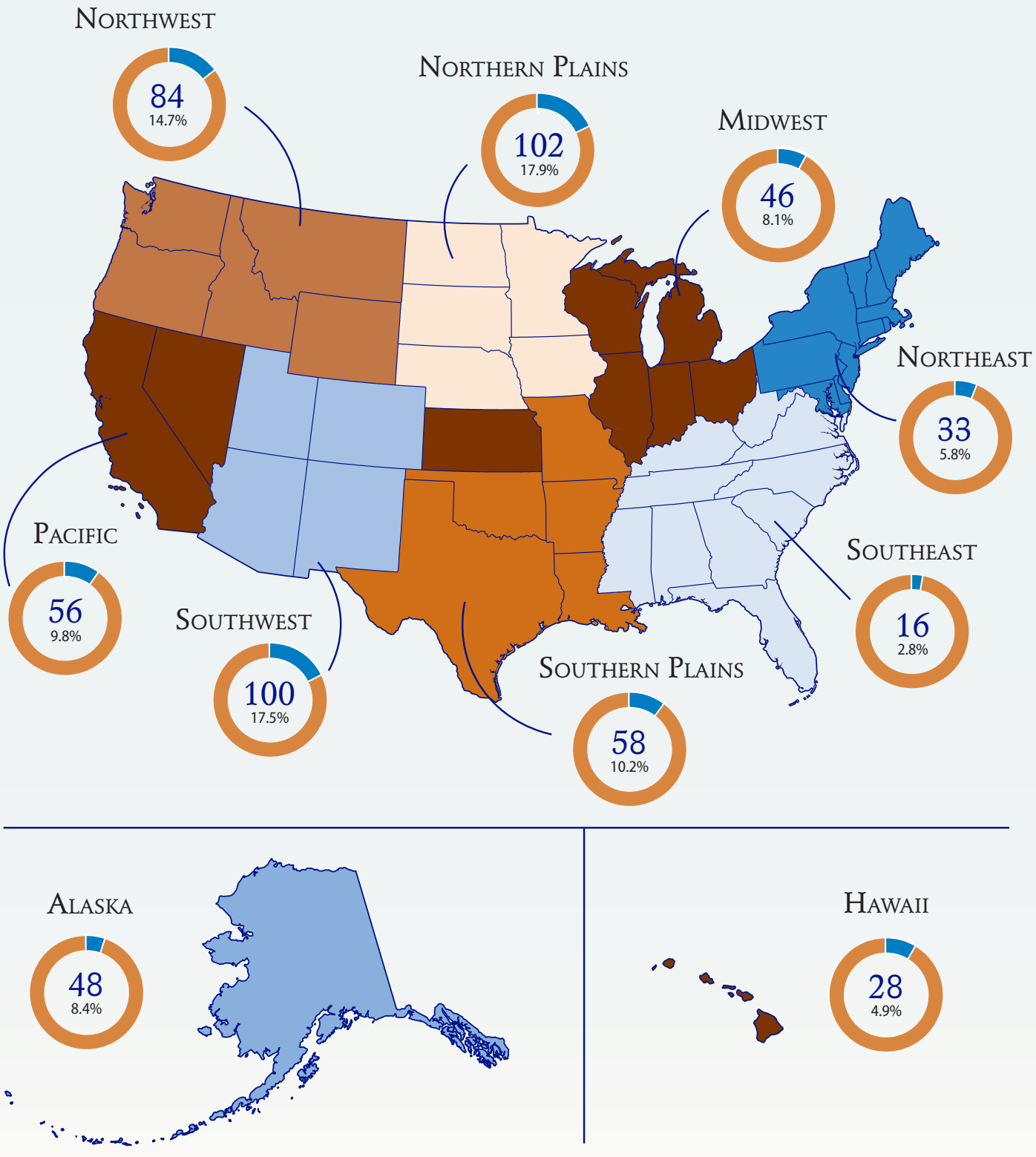
These rankings changed for the period of 2015 through 2017, with the percentage of funding requests decreasing in the Northwest, Southwest and Pacific regions (see **Figure 3** for regional funding breakdown) and increasing in all other regions. The Northwest region experienced the greatest decline in percentage of funding requests. From 2010 to 2014, this region captured over 20% of total funding requests, whereas from 2015 to 2017, this region captured only 14.7% of total funding requests. The Southern Plains region experienced the greatest increase in percentage of funding requests, going from capturing 7.2% of requests from 2010 to 2014 to capturing 10.2% of requests from 2015 to 2017. The remaining regions stayed relatively the same in regard to the percentage of funding requests.

Region	2010-2014 Percentage	2015-2017 Percentage
Northern Plains	16.6%	17.9%
Southwest	19.3%	17.5%
Northwest	20.4%	14.7%
Southern Plains	7.2%	10.2%
Pacific	10.8%	9.8%
Alaska	8.0%	8.4%
Midwest	6.5%	8.1%
Northeast	5.1%	5.8%
Hawaii	3.8%	4.9%
Southeast	2.3%	2.8%

Overall, 50% of our funding requests came from three main regions: Northern Plains, Southwest, and Northwest. Given the general correlation between the number of funding requests from a region and Native community concentrations, the call for NYCF Requests for Proposals continued to have a strong reach across Indian Country and a high response rate from Native communities.

5 The geographic regions for this report are divided as follows: Northwest (WA,OR, ID, MT, WY); Southwest (AZ, UT, CO, NM); Northern Plains (ND, SD, NE, MN); Pacific (CA, NV); Southern Plains (TX, OK, AR, LA, MO); Midwest (IA, IL, KS, WI, MI, OH, IN); Northeast (MD, DE, PA, NY, VT, NH, ME, NJ, CT, MA, RI, DC); Southeast (WV, VA, KY, MS, AL, TN, GA, FL, NC, SC).

Figure 3: Funding Requests by Region



Innovation and Impact

California Indian Museum and Cultural Center Teaches Native Youth to Challenge and Overcome Stereotypes

By Amy Jakober

The California Indian Museum and Cultural Center, with funding from First Nations Development Institute's Native Youth and Culture Fund, launched the Tribal Ambassadors Through Business program. This initiative teaches young people business skills through both online courses and the opportunity to open and run a museum store, showcasing and selling Native arts and crafts.

Nicole Myers-Lim, executive director of the California Indian Museum and Cultural Center, knows the value of this education. She grew up experiencing first-hand the lack of knowledge and awareness about Native Indians in California.

Coming from a tribe that was spread out across multiple counties, she was often the only Indian in a classroom. Natives like herself would have to listen as their culture was appropriated and a new "version" of their history was taught and shared. The real story was dismissed, or teachers would look to the one Indian in the class to be an "expert" on their culture, highlighting the child's differences and calling attention to them at a time when they just want to fit in.

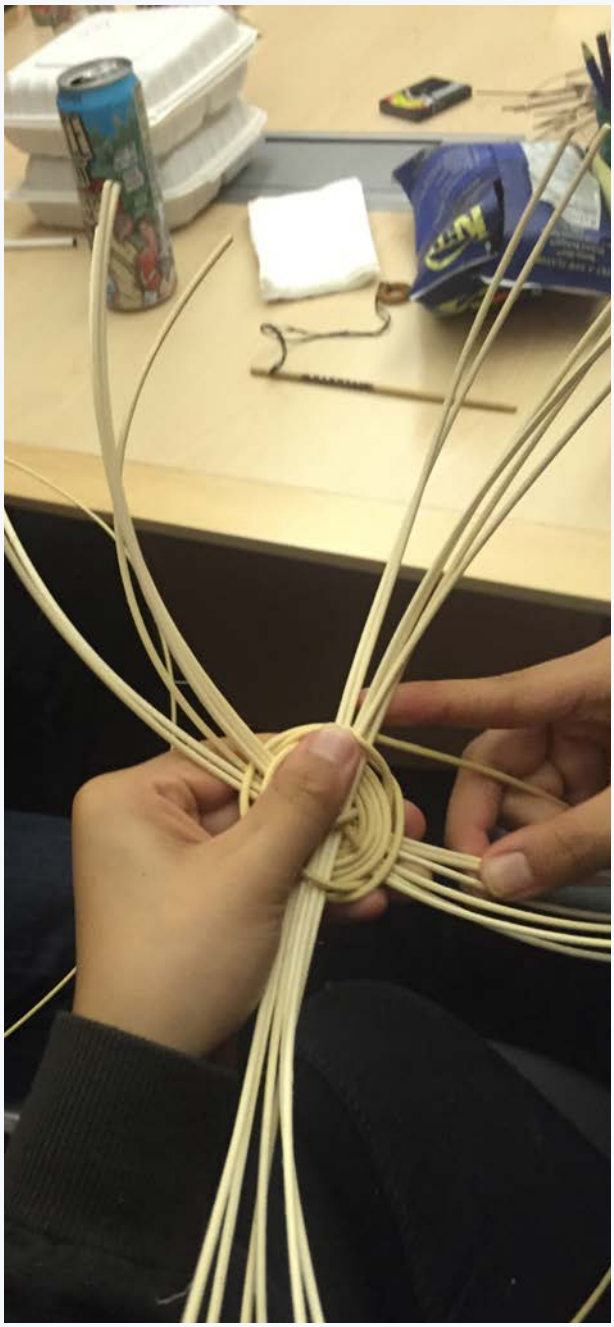
California's Native culture was further compromised due to their small population, and the sensationalizing of stories like that of Ishi, who was known as the "Last Wild Indian" in all of California. This lack of awareness and appreciation for the truth about Native culture led to outcomes that have been typical throughout Indian Country – high rates of suicide, substance abuse and increased drop-out rates – according to Myers-Lim.

"Growing up in an environment where negative experiences about who you are and how things really happened is harmful. It can produce anxiety and anger," said Myers-Lim. "Kids don't feel like their education is relevant or meaningful."

The Tribal Ambassadors Through Business program attempts to reteach this history and generate pride in Native culture through

the confidence-building vehicle of business. In the year-long program, 23 students took part in online business-planning courses, and then called on their new skills to launch a microenterprise of selling Native arts. They evaluated product concepts, considering factors of expense and availability of supplies, assembly and packaging, along with demand, price points and prototyping. As they learned the business end of this microenterprise store at the California Indian Museum, they also focused on another key component: educational value and cultural relevance.

"As ambassadors, the kids have been empowered to represent themselves," said Myers-Lim. "The program gives them the privilege to learn about their heritage and share it. It gives them pride, and they draw strength from that." To learn more about the California Indian Museum and Culture Center and the Tribal Youth Ambassador project, visit http://cimcc.org.



Who Applies?

First Nations funds four main types of Native-controlled entities. These are:

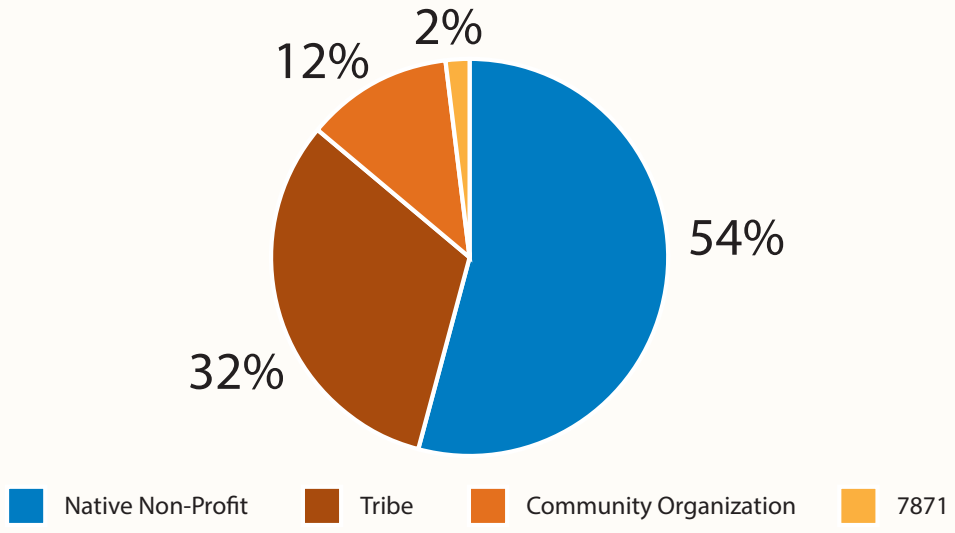
- Federal- and state-recognized tribal governments, programs and departments.
- Native-controlled 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.
- Tribal entities identifying as 7871 organizations[6].
- Fiscally-sponsored Native-controlled community organizations.

For purposes of eligibility, First Nations defines "Native-controlled" as an organization in which a majority of the Board of Directors and leadership team are American Indian, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian.

The majority of applicants to the NYCF from 2015 to 2017 came from Native-controlled nonprofit organizations. This is followed by tribes and tribal programs, Native community organizations, and 7871 organizations, respectively. The breakdown in the types of entities applying for the NYCF stayed approximately the same as the previous report. For purposes of clarification, in the 2010-2014 report, Native nonprofits and community organizations were combined into one category and tribes/tribal programs and 7871s were combined into a second category. In this current report, the categories are disaggregated to see the individual breakdowns year-by-year.

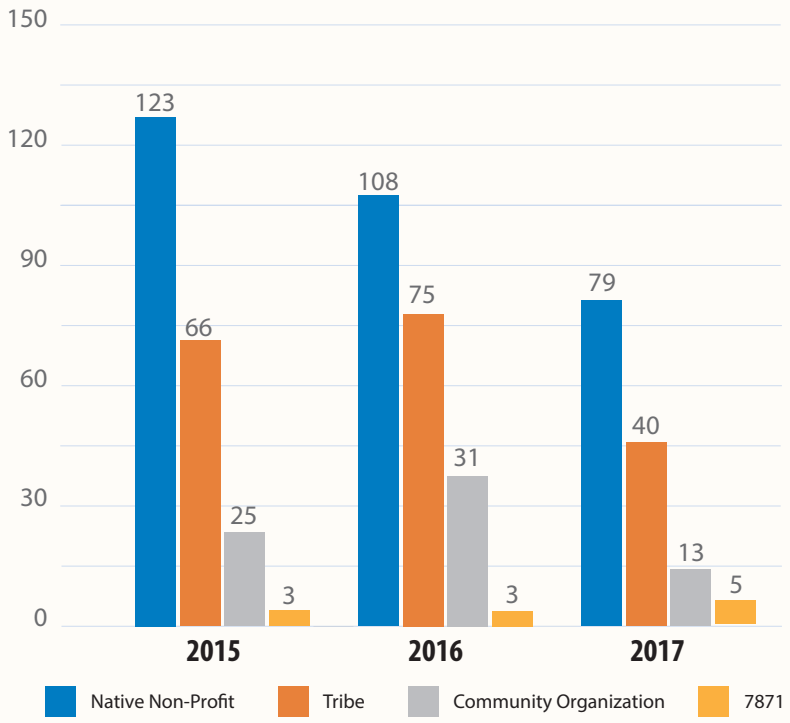
Figure 4 provides the overall breakdown in requests by entity type for the three-year span of 2015 to 2017, and **Figure 5** provides a breakdown by year of requests by entity type. The data continue to demonstrate that the nonprofit sector in Native communities is a substantial anchor for pursuing and supporting Native youth and culture issues.

Figure 4: Grant Requests by Organization Type, 2015-2017



6 Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 7871 treats tribal governments as state governments for certain tax purposes. It allows tribal governments, their political subdivisions, or any tribal governmental fund, entity or program that is an integral part of a tribal government to receive tax-deductible donations. From a federal government standpoint, 7871s are part of the tribe. However, some tribes may have different governing structures or other distinctions for their 7871s that distinguish them from tribal government departments. For more information on Section 7871 organizations, see First Nations' 2009 Publication *Charitable and Sovereign: Understanding Tribal 7871 Organizations*.

Figure 5: Grant Requests by Organization Type, by Year



Furthermore, approximately 1 in 4 nonprofit applicant organizations (or 27%) were less than five years old based on their registration dates with the IRS. Nearly 1 in 2 nonprofit applicant organizations (45%) were less than 10 years old based on their registration dates with the IRS. The oldest nonprofits applying for the NYCF came from urban areas; younger nonprofits tended to come from rural- and reservation-based areas.

Innovation and Impact

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) Promotes Cultural Pride and Youth Leadership

By Amy Jakober

Since 2012, First Nations Institute (First Nations) has granted almost $120,000 to the Zuni Youth Enrichment Program (ZYEP) through the First Nations Native Youth and Culture Fund (NYCF) and the Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative. With this funding, ZYEP has made it possible for more than 500 children to benefit from sports, summer camps, after-school programs, community gardens, trails and playgrounds throughout the community. ZYEP programs and projects not only engage children and youth in a positive environment, they have a direct impact on key challenges faced in the Zuni community.

Primarily, Zuni children and teens are getting opportunities to explore their heritage, an experience that is increasing their self-esteem and helping them see new opportunities for the future. "It means so much for these kids to know who they are and where they're from," said Zowie Banteah-Yuselew, former program coordinator for the ZYEP. "It lets them know they have a purpose greater than themselves."

According to Banteah-Yuselew, many Zuni youth – like other young Native populations across the country – deal with pressures of not having quality role models and influences, not identifying with their ancestry, and not being able to communicate effectively. These pressures can leave Zuni youth vulnerable to issues such as childhood obesity, suicide, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. ZYEP works to restore Zuni cultural ties and re-establish core values in the community, which can protect at-risk youth.

"Through our programs, we give them a positive atmosphere, a sense of camaraderie and a safe place to learn, grow and move forward," Banteah-Yuselew said. "Students end up being more comfortable. They learn to have pride in their heritage."

ZYEP has established several Native youth-based projects, including an after-school program in the evenings and on weekends where students take part in activities that keep them active and help them

develop a deeper connection with their culture through activities like storytelling, hiking, fishing and gardening. During three sports seasons a year, more than 160 ZYEP children get an opportunity to play basketball, baseball and soccer, nurturing their self-esteem and laying the groundwork for a healthy adulthood.

ZYEP also hosts regular summer camps for Native youth that focus on cultural pride and leadership. Leading the summer camp are 17 youth mentors who are hired and trained by ZYEP. To become camp counselors, teens must go through a selective application and interview process.

"Many youth in our community do not have a means to obtain summer jobs," said Dr. Valory Wangler, former ZYEP Director of Development. "Through the process of applying to work at ZYEP summer camp, teens practice skills that are critical for their career development and for their future success."

Youth mentors also go on a weekend leadership trip, which immerses them in training to become counselors and lets them explore places of their ancestry, often getting special access to archeological sites and Native areas based on their heritage. Banteah-Yuselew said the experience helps youth form a positive group of peers. It also deepens their connections with their culture, giving them a sense of identity and confidence in what they can achieve. She said many youth mentors go on to work in education and youth development on their own or return to lead ZYEP programs.

ZYEP programs also seek to foster a healthy, active lifestyle for children and have a measurable impact. After the 2014 summer camp, reports show children had an increase in physical activity of 10 minutes per day, a decrease in soda consumption of 9.3 ounces per day, and overall improvements in strength and performance

Kaleia Vicenti, a student who was involved in many ZYEP programs, said, "ZYEP helped me stay active. If we didn't have these programs we would always be inside watching TV."

ZYEP recognizes that healthy kids make healthy families and healthy communities. The organization builds trails and playgrounds with motivational Zuni symbols, creating spaces that promote physical activity in a culturally affirming environment. The program also engages families in caring for a community garden, and helps them reconnect with Zuni practices in farming and water conservation.

Support from First Nations' NYCF and other grant programs has helped position ZYEP for ongoing growth. "Through First Nations, our impact has grown with every grant," said Banteah-Yuselew. Learn more about the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project at www.zyep.org

What Program Areas Do Native Communities Need Funded?

Each application to First Nations contains a section for applicants to select different project focus areas for their program. Because many programs serve multiple areas of need, applicants can select multiple focus areas in their proposal. The project focus areas appearing on the Native Youth and Culture Fund application were as follows:

- Agricultural/Ranching.
- Ceremonial, Spiritual and/or Traditional.
- Community Garden.
- Development of Curricula.
- Ecological/Environmental.
- Economic, Financial and/or Entrepreneurial.
- Education.
- Innovative Marketing and Outreach Approaches.
- Introducing Youth to Agriculture and Traditional Food Systems.
- Language Acquisition/Revitalization.
- Media Arts and/or Documentary.
- Multi-Generational and/or Mentoring.
- Peer Learning.
- Recreation/Athletics.
- Regalia and Cultural Arts and Crafts.
- Tribal Courts/Justice.
- Youth in Government.
- Youth Leadership/Empowerment.
- Other.

In the 2010-2014 report, the top four project focus areas for funding were as follows:

- Ceremonial, Spiritual and/or Traditional.
- Multi-Generational and/or Mentoring.
- Youth Leadership/Empowerment.
- Education.

(Ceremonial and Multi-Generational tied for the number one project focus area.)

The 2015-2017 data indicate that these four areas remain a top priority. Ceremonial, Spiritual and/or Traditional work remains the number one focus area for Native youth programs. Meanwhile, Youth Leadership/Empowerment and Education programs are becoming increasingly important.

Further, a second cluster of focus areas reveals that Regalia and Arts and Crafts and Language Acquisition/Revitalization also have continued their trend from the 2010-2014 report as higher-ranking priorities. It is of interest that Peer Learning is now included in this second cluster. In the 2010-2014 report, Peer Learning was not even a top 10 priority area for the Native Youth and Culture Fund. The latest information now has it ranked as number seven.

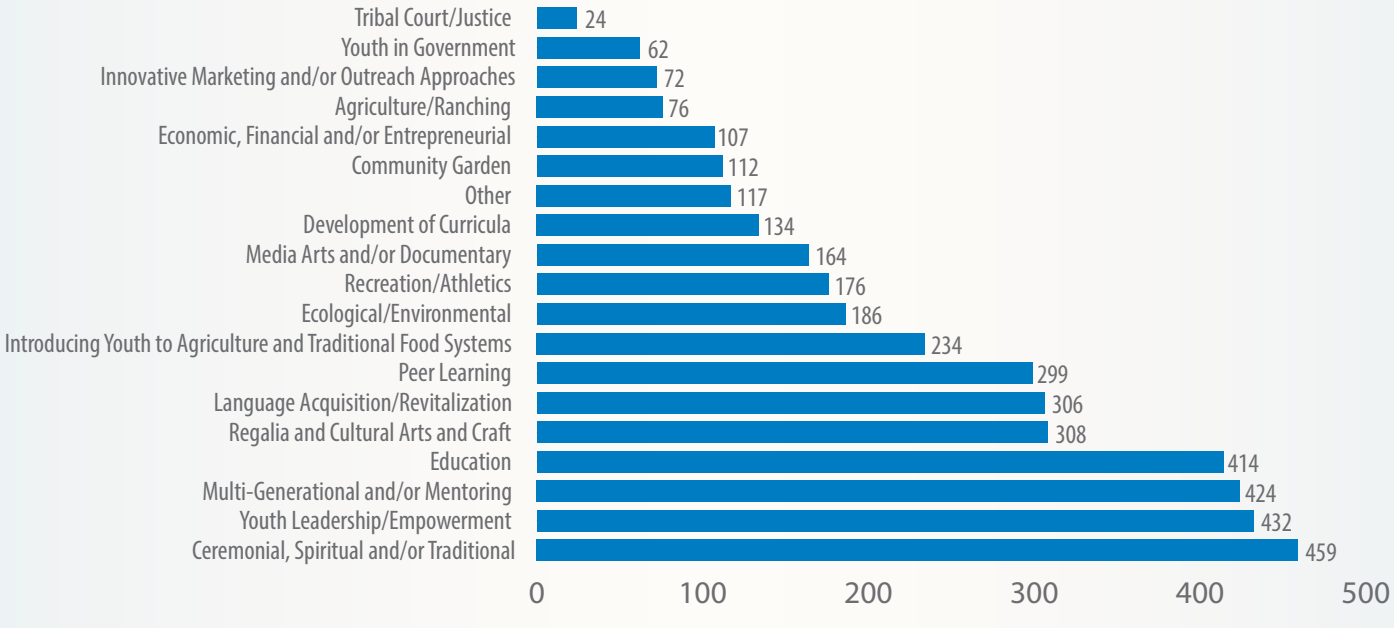
Overall, the top 10 priority areas for the NYCF during the 2015-2017 period were:

- Ceremonial, Spiritual and/or Traditional.
- Youth Leadership/Empowerment.
- Multi-Generational and/or Mentoring.
- Education.
- Regalia and Cultural Arts and Crafts.
- Language Acquisition/Revitalization.
- Peer Learning.
- Introducing Youth to Agriculture and Traditional Food Systems.
- Ecological/Environmental.
- Recreation/Athletics.

Applicants also have the opportunity to create their own focus area using the "Other" selection. A large percentage of organizations that selected the "other category" noted work related to youth mental and physical health, including drug, alcohol and suicide prevention.

These grant request data are similar to youth survey data highlighted by the Center for Native American Youth in its report, *Our Identities as Civic Power: The State of Native Youth 2017*. The report incorporates data collected from Native youth across the country regarding the top issues they face in their communities. Key issues noted in the report comprise culture and language, education and employment, and mental and physical health, including nutrition related to food sovereignty. For the most part, these key issues correlate with programmatic work of Native community organizations under the NYCF project requests. This suggests that communities are listening to the needs of their youth and that programming may be increasingly driven by Native youth themselves.

Figure 6: NYCF Requests by Funding Area, Total 2015-2017



Innovation and Impact

Medicine Lodge Confederacy Revives Star Boy Camps to Promote Arikara Culture, Language and Spirituality

By Mary K. Bowannie

In 2017, the Medicine Lodge Confederacy (MLC), located in White Shield, North Dakota, received a Native Youth and Culture Fund grant to help revive the Arikara Tribe's traditional Star Boy Camps. Historically, the Arikara Tribe hosted young men societies in which boys and young men were mentored by older men. MLC is striving to revive these ways of teaching through the Star Boy Camp, which recruited young men ages 12 to 15 and taught them the skills of leadership, communication, confidence and self-discipline in the summer of 2017. Those who excelled at the camp would return to be peer counselors the next year.

Jennifer Young Bear, of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara (MHA Nation), served as the Star Boy Camp Coordinator. She said the seven-day camp came about with a lot of hard work, perseverance and patience as it rained for two straight days. For many of the young men, it was their first experience learning how to build a sweat or a traditional fire using flint.

"There were older mentors to help, the boys slept in an earth lodge, and in the end they were pretty proficient in the process of the camp – doing all the things that needed to be done. It was a little community within themselves," said Young Bear.

The young men traditionally butchered a buffalo on the ground, which included skinning the hide, quartering and packaging the meat, singing songs in their traditional Arikara language, and hearing the traditional stories of their tribe. When the rain passed, they went canoeing and swimming and enjoyed the outdoors of the 3,500-acre ranch west of White Shield.

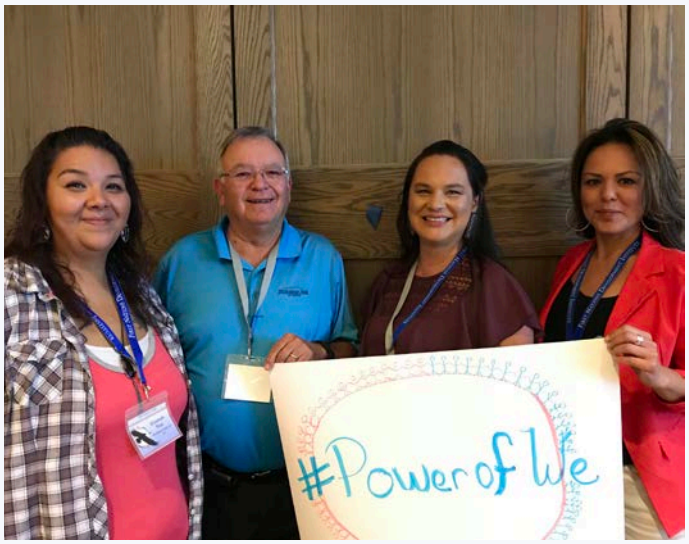
One important aspect of the camp was to help ground the boys in their cultural teachings and spiritual foundation. The boys hiked three to five miles in the badlands to connect and build a relationship with the land and the environment. They also learned different ways to handle stress by doing breathing exercises and meditating. They were shown how to identify traditional plants and call them by their Arikara name.

"We visited with the parents about the camp, and in the evaluations, one parent said, 'My son left as a boy and came back as a man.' Going into manhood – there were traditional stories in our tribe about different socials that were held. We used to have these things. People saw the way the boys left and how they were focused on their body, mind, spirit and emotions, which was uplifting to the camp," said Young Bear.

Medicine Lodge Confederacy recruited boys from within the Three Affiliated Tribes and boys identified by the juvenile court probation officer. Young Bear said the boys on probation fit in with the others, and that "in their own way, they kept order."

From the experience over the seven days, Young Bear said she hopes the boys take with them those learnings as they progress though life. She, along with many others – from the tribal probation officer, to the Arikara language teacher, the tribal education program, the cultural and marketing director, and the MHA Buffalo Ranch that donated the buffalo to the Star Boy Camp – worked together on all aspects of the effort. Young Bear said the group made the first camp and future camps possible and will continue to build on long-established roots.

"I'd like to thank First Nations for funding us and for giving our boys a chance. We were very inspired. As Arikara people, we're gardeners and we work with the corn. We're in the early stages of our nonprofit, and our group is planting seeds with our children and we're planting seeds within those young people and growing young men. They, in turn, are inspiring us as a group to keep growing to reach the next generations in the leading of our people," said Young Bear.



Conclusions

Similar to First Nations' 2015 *Investing in Native Youth* report, this report demonstrates that there remains a significant unmet need in Indian Country for programs that empower Native youth through their cultural identity and knowledge. Increasingly, programs are also incorporating peer learning into their program strategies and not relying as heavily on multi-generational learning and mentoring, though this is still an important and key strategy.

From the projects First Nations has funded, we have seen multiple youth programs evolve to have successful graduates of summer camps and other types of programming become mentors to younger youth as they grow older. For example, organizations like Zuni Youth Enrichment Project and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe have seen great success in this model in which young men and women serve as camp counselors and youth mentors. These youth must go through a selective application and interview process as part of the program and receive additional mentoring in order to take on and fulfill their leadership roles. When asked to reflect on their experience as camp counselors, one teen noted that she became more than just the girls' counselor to the younger youth. She said, "I was like a big sister to them." The organizations also note how the younger children look up to their teen and college-age mentors. This speaks to the success of these programs, which are having a long-term impact on Native youth and communities. These programs are more than one- or two-day events that Native youth attend. They have a long-term impact on youth cultural engagement, leadership and well-being that proliferates into the rest of the community.

Native youth themselves are also speaking out about the issues that matter to them and impact their future success and well-being. For the 2017 Gen-I survey, youth respondents were asked to identify the top three issues facing their communities. Fifty-eight percent of respondents selected culture and language, 43% selected education, 35% selected job preparation and employment, and 33% selected mental and emotional health. In the NYCF application process we emphasize the importance of youth involvement and ask how youth are actively involved in the programming. Increasingly we see organizations provide responses related to youth surveys informing areas of need or projects arising from input by youth councils and advisory committees. The project requests indicate that those needs are being heard and programming adjusted to fit the needs of specific communities.

As national data reveal in conjunction with the findings of this report, there are still many opportunities for foundations and funders to invest in Indian Country by supporting Native youth programs. Based on our data, the top 10 funding areas to consider are:

- Ceremonial, Spiritual and/or Traditional.
- Youth Leadership/Empowerment.
- Multi-Generational and/or Mentoring.
- Education.
- Regalia and Cultural Arts and Crafts.
- Language Acquisition/Revitalization.
- Peer Learning.
- Introducing Youth to Agriculture and Traditional Food Systems.
- Ecological/Environmental.
- Recreation/Athletics.

Also worth considering are programs targeted at youth mental and physical health, which may relate to reliable access to healthy foods and food sovereignty initiatives.

First Nations maintains the belief that Native youth represent the future of Native communities and that their health and well-being determine the future overall health and well-being of a community. Nationwide, the youth in this country are being called to action to serve as leaders in their communities and to speak up for the items that matter most to them. Native youth should not be forgotten in this movement. By investing in Native youth and giving them a sense of place and tradition, we can ensure that Native communities will have bright and capable leaders to sustain our cultures and carry us into the future.

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First Nations Development Institute

2432 Main Street, 2nd Floor • Longmont, Colorado 80501
Tel 303.774.7836 • www.firstnation.org