



# Positive Pathways

A Landscape Analysis  
*of* Programs Serving

**Native American  
Boys *and* Young Men**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication is supported by a grant from Research Integration Strategy and Evaluation (RISE) for Boys and Men of Color. RISE for Boys and Men of Color is a field advancement effort that aims to better understand and strategically improve the lives, experiences and outcomes of boys and men of color in the United State – that concluded in 2018. RISE spanned five fields (education, health, human services and social policy, juvenile and criminal justice, and workforce development) and focuses on four populations (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans). First Nations thanks RISE for Boys and Men of Color as its support made this publication possible. However, the opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of RISE for Boys and Men of Color host institutions or any of its supporters or funders.

This report was written by the following First Nations Development Institute staff members: Kendall Tallmadge, Lead Grants Officer; Sarah Hernandez, Communications Officer; and Raymond Foxworth, Vice President of Grantmaking, Development and Communications. Organizational profiles were written by Amy Jakober, First Nations’ communications consultant. First Nations also expresses its deepest thanks to all the organizations serving Native boys and young men who responded to our national survey and participated in our convening, as they have made this report possible.

This report was created for the exclusive use of First Nations Development Institute. All material is copyrighted and is not intended for reprint unless permission is specifically granted by First Nations Development Institute. Such permission is also needed for quotes of 50 words or more, or more than 400 words of material quoted from this report.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

*First Nations Development Institute. (2019). Positive Pathways: A Landscape Analysis of Programs Serving Native American Boys and Young Men. Longmont, CO.*

© 2019 First Nations Development Institute.

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



# Introduction

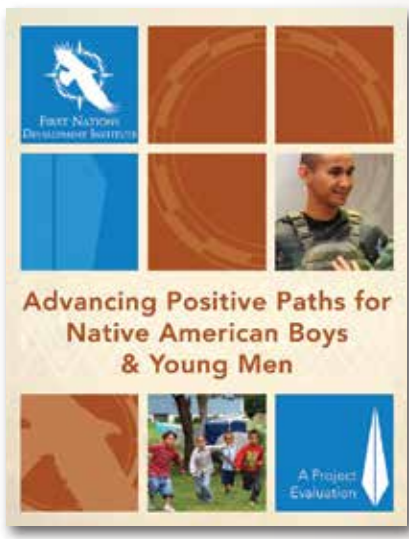


**FIRST NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE**

The Native American youth population is growing at a significantly higher rate than the general population.<sup>1</sup> First Nations Development Institute (First Nations) recognizes that this rapidly growing Native youth population is an important asset for Indian Country with the power and potential to transform Native communities. Unfortunately, many data have detailed the significant challenges and adversity that Native youth face in their daily lives.<sup>2</sup> Despite these challenges, Native communities are taking an active stance to create programs and services to improve the lives and well-being of Native youth.

In this report, we examine the organizational characteristics and philanthropic landscape of support for Native boys and young men. In 2014, with generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NEO Philanthropy and Kalliopeia Foundation, First Nations launched a new grant initiative to provide funding to tribes and Native-led organizations dedicated to working with Native boys and young men to overcome some of these challenges and barriers.

In 2016, First Nations published “Advancing Positive Paths for Native American Boys and Young Men: A Project Evaluation,” which identified and proposed solutions to overcoming some of the educational disparities adversely affecting Native young boys and men. As documented in that report, Native males experience higher dropout rates, suspension rates and special education placements than white males and Native females.<sup>3</sup> The programs supported under that initiative noted that the key to Native boys and young men overcoming these disparities is to reconnect them with their cultures and communities, and to provide strong positive mentorship for young Native men and boys.<sup>4</sup>



This report builds on that research and is the first attempt to examine the characteristics, strengths and challenges of organizations that serve Native boys and young men. First Nations has long believed that programmatic interventions that emphasize Native cultures, places, languages and spiritualities can strengthen cultural identity, increase self-esteem and result in many other positive outcomes for Native youth and their tribal communities.

To better understand how programs serve Native boys and young men, First Nations developed and distributed a national survey across its media channels to understand more about these programs, including levels of support, staffing and reach into their local communities. First Nations received 332 completed responses to this survey, of which 115 (34% of respondent organizations) currently provide some type of programming specifically for Native boys and young men.

Data collected from these surveys included: organizational type, staff size, budget, types of programming available, age ranges served, whether programming was co-ed or gender-specific, breakdown of funding sources, top funding needs and priority areas for technical assistance and training.

First Nations also convened 10 organizations that serve Native boys and young men in order to discover best practices, challenges, barriers to success, and systemic and policy issues affecting their efforts. Both our survey and data collected from our convening inform the information in this report.

The following findings were drawn after careful review of these survey results and the convening:

- 1 | **Organizations and tribal departments serving Native boys and young men generally operate with limited resources both in staff size and budget.** 63% of the organizations that serve Native boys and young men have staff sizes of fewer than 10 people, and three-fourths (75%) of them are operating with annual budgets less than \$30,000 toward programs specifically for Native boys and young men. Despite these limited resources, tribal leaders and community organizers are fiercely committed to supporting Native youth and guiding them and their communities toward a brighter future.
- 2 | **Programming initiatives for Native boys and young men are short-lived due to inconsistent funding sources.** Tribes and nonprofits are often forced to compete for the same limited resources. Furthermore, many programs serving Native boys and young men are tied to single grants, thus making it difficult to maintain sustainable programming. In addition to program sustainability, many of these organizations are also concerned about professional development, program expansion and revenue development.
- 3 | **Many programs place emphasis on providing traditional cultural teachings and knowledge to Native boys and young men.** Native cultures and communities provide Native boys and young men with identity, purpose and strength, as well as teach them values of respect, responsibility and health and wellness. Tribal leaders and practitioners recognize this strength, as demonstrated by the top programming areas for Native boys and young men, which include traditional arts and culture, leadership development and education.
- 4 | **There is a great need to support training and recruiting for Native male mentors.** Many organizations and entities serving Native boys and young men struggle to find positive male role models within the community who are equipped to take on mentoring positions. Funders should view mentoring training and recruitment as a critical investment strategy to build Native youth leadership and contribute to long-term program sustainability. Successful mentees become the mentors of the future.
- 5 | **Programs that make many connection points into communities tend to be more successful.** In other words, programs where there are overlapping and strong partnerships between tribes and other Native-led organizations tend to be more successful than those with weak relationships. In many instances these overlapping partnerships reinforce the need for creating pathways for young boys and men. Moreover, given the limited dollars supporting programming to empower young boys and men, strong partnerships allow nonprofits and tribal government or departments to fill in gaps and draw on one another's strengths to increase program effectiveness.

Tribes and Native-led nonprofits are leading many of the efforts to empower, engage and educate Native youth. They are using traditional knowledge and innovative solutions to support Native boys and young men and positively transform Indian Country. Woven throughout this report are organizational profiles that describe the delivery and impact of these programs and services.



## BACKGROUND

Native youth, including Native boys and men, are often labeled as “high risk” or seen through a lens of dysfunction. Many socioeconomic indicators do indeed document social and health indicators affecting Native boys and men. This includes research highlighting that Native boys and young men experience many more social and health disparities than white males and Native females, including a lack of education, inadequate health care, and high rates of unemployment and incarceration.<sup>5</sup> They often first encounter these challenges and barriers very early in life, starting in school and persisting throughout adulthood.

But these statistics only tell us a limited story about the status of Native young boys and men today and in history. These data also fall into a long line of deficiency-based research that has long plagued Native communities, and are often rooted in frameworks aimed at painting entire communities and their experiences as invisible, hopeless or in complete dysfunction beyond repair.

Consequentially, these statistics do not fully tell the story of how we have arrived at a place and time where Native youth, especially Native boys and men, have been labeled as “in crisis.” Nor do they help us understand how Native communities are working to create programs that engage Native boys and young men to create positive pathways for the future.

Many tribes and Native-led nonprofit organizations began to formalize culturally-relevant, community-based programs with the goal of lowering some of these troubling statistics. In this report, we seek to highlight three of those success stories to emphasize the important work that Native-led organizations are already doing to reverse these trends, and empower Native boys and young men to be leaders and changemakers in their communities. These programs vary in the duration of their histories and the strengths and challenges they face in delivering programming. However, each exhibit dedication and resilience in supporting Native American boys and young men.



### PROFILE 1

## Home, Health, Healing: Creating a World Where Young Men Can Thrive

The Division of Indian Work (DIW) works to empower urban American Indians in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota through culturally-based education, counseling, advocacy and leadership development. For much of its existence, DIW operated in partnership with the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, which began over 65 years ago. In 2017, DIW reorganized on its own to become a solely American Indian-led organization committed to strengthening the Native community. In line with its focus on youth and families, many of DIW’s programs and activities directly impact the lives of young men and boys.

According to DIW Executive Director Louise Matson, DIW reaches out to young men and boys to meet their needs wherever they are. Services range from the fundamental – giving at-risk boys a roof over their heads – to the more advanced – providing family leadership skills to new fathers.

*On tours to sacred sites, youth at the Division of Indian Work discover a sense of identity and belonging that helps them overcome challenges.*



Young boys learn more about their culture and themselves through activities like the Moccasin Game.



Tours to sacred sites provide an opportunity to address historical trauma, grief and loss of Indian people.

In one of its most fundamental programs, DIW operates the Healing Spirit House, which provides supportive, drug-free and alcohol-free housing and in-house services specifically for Native males ages 16 to 21 who are part of the foster care system. Designed more like a home than a facility, the Healing Spirit House creates a positive, safe environment where the boys and young men do household chores and plan and cook meals. At the same time, they're able to meet with full-time, onsite Native male staff who act as role models and help them set and meet educational and career goals.

Boys in the Healing Spirit program can also join other foster care kids in DIW's Healthy Transitions and Homelessness Prevention. This program teaches skills for living independently outside the foster care system, ensuring that young people are prepared to work and study, manage money and care for themselves in a daily routine.

Through these programs and all DIW initiatives, spirituality and culture are prominent.

Culture is also woven into DIW's additional programs that benefit young men and boys and that are focused on health and healing. There is an Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Prevention Program, a Clearway Tobacco Cessation Program, and the Horizons Unlimited Food Shelf for fresh meats, fruits and vegetables. There are programs to support in-home parents and family violence prevention. A men's domestic violence program aims to educate Native American men about how a history of oppression has affected them personally and what that can mean to their relationships.

Matson asserted that a critical feature of all DIW programs is that they are asset-based and strengths-focused. She said often when it comes to addressing men, the focus is on the negative – after-incident intervention or anger management. Yet, DIW believes the emphasis should be on culture as prevention.

**"We know how to heal ourselves,"** Matson said. "Customs like sweat lodges and dark-room ceremonies are part of our culture, but they also are positive rituals that draw on strengths. This makes them powerful tools for boys and young men."

She added, "We don't have to feel sorry for ourselves. We can address historical trauma, grief and loss, and we can do it through culturally-specific services."

Matson explained that challenges DIW has faced in providing these services have stemmed from the common problem of not enough funding. Throughout the organization's 65 years, it has been fueled by government contracts, fee-based services, donations, grants and partnerships with like-minded organizations. Through the years, programs have stopped and started based on funding, and some programs have had to evolve to fit the resources available.

"We're getting our kids graduated, we're making progress," she said. Indeed, DIW impacts the lives of 500 clients every year, of whom 100 are men and boys. Still she said, they can do better, and there's much work to be done.

"We can offer solutions before problems become chronic," she said. "We can lay the foundation."

And that foundation is what the boys who pass through their doors need. As Matson said, they may grow up to be doctors, writers and artists. And through the Division of Indian Work, they're seeing these possibilities. Obstacles are being broken down, and they're discovering how far their potential can take them. "They deserve resources and support to make things better," Matson said. "We can see how fantastic things can be."

## METHODOLOGY

To aid philanthropic partners in supporting Native youth programs, First Nations released grantmaking trends reports on its long-standing Native Youth and Culture Fund (NYCF) grant program. This program began in 2002 and annually awards approximately 20 grants of \$20,000 each to tribal governments and Native nonprofits throughout the U.S. The NYCF grantmaking trends report highlights the severe lack of funding available for youth programs in Indian Country.<sup>6</sup> The report also provides insight to other funders on the types of programming being requested and where and who is requesting the funds.

This type of data are not readily available for programs specifically targeting Native American boys and young men. In order to gain a better understanding of the landscape of organizations serving this particular group, First Nations released a national survey to collect data on organizational type, staff size, budget, types of programming available, age ranges served, whether programming was co-ed or gender-specific, breakdown of funding sources, top funding needs and priority areas for technical assistance and training. First Nations received 332<sup>7</sup> completed responses to this survey, of which 115, or one-third of respondents,<sup>8</sup> currently provide some type of programming specifically targeted for Native boys and young men.

Ten of the responding organizations were selected to participate in a one-day convening to share their stories, challenges and successes in more detail regarding their work with Native boys and young men. These 10 organizations are diverse in type, geographical region, size, budget, programming available and age ranges served. However, they came to share many similarities in the struggles they face as well as best practices. Information from the one-day convening was gathered in multiple formats, including individual worksheets, group ranking exercises and notes documenting group conversations and the overall process by First Nations' staff.

Participants were engaged in a facilitation exercise called a "Learning Journey" to aid in understanding the highs, lows and plateaus of their programming throughout time. As participants advanced through the Learning Journey, they were asked to think about various internal and external factors that contributed to high and low points, such as staffing, funding sources, other partners, and organizational leadership among others. Using the Learning Journey, participants were able to think more critically about the individual strengths and challenges of their programs, and as a group identified the most pressing or critical issues for their organizations along with measures of success. The data presented in this report are a combination of high-level findings from the national survey combined with information gained from focused discussions with these 10 organizations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS of PROGRAMS SERVING NATIVE BOYS and YOUNG MEN

In June 2018, First Nations conducted a national survey, garnering 332 responses from tribal programs, nonprofits and other entities serving Native American youth. The number of responses was far more than we expected, but respondents provided insight into the overall landscape of organizations and programs that serve Native communities.

### Types of programs offered by Native Youth-Serving Organizations

#### Types of Programming Offered by Native Youth-Serving Organizations

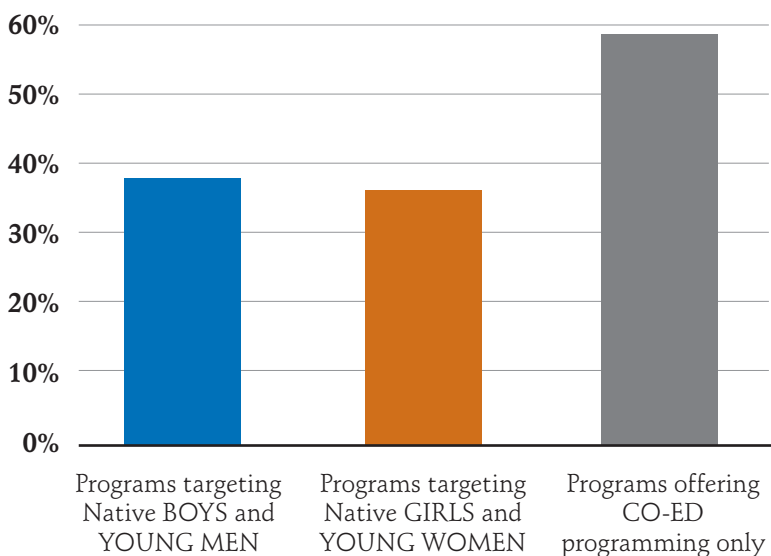
TABLE 1

Co-Ed Programming Only	58.4%
Co-Ed Programs and Programming Targeted for Both Genders	32.5%
Co-Ed Programs and Programming Targeted for Native Boys and Young Men	3.9%
Co-Ed Programs and Programming Targeted for Native Girls and Young Women	2.4%
Native Boys and Young Men Programming Only	1.5%
Native Girls and Young Women Programming Only	1.2%

Of the 332 respondents, 38% of organizations indicated they provided programming specifically for Native boys and young men in some capacity, with the majority of organizations providing co-ed youth programs in conjunction with gender-specific programs. Moreover, only 1.2% of organizational respondents indicated that they provided programming for Native girls and young women only and the other 58.4% of respondents did not have gender-specific programming; rather, their programs were co-ed only.

FIGURE 1

#### Programming Breakdown by Gender



**Important to note, of the organizations currently offering only co-ed programming, 46 said they *did* offer programming targeting Native boys and young men in the past but that programming had stopped for a variety of reasons.**

## Organization Type

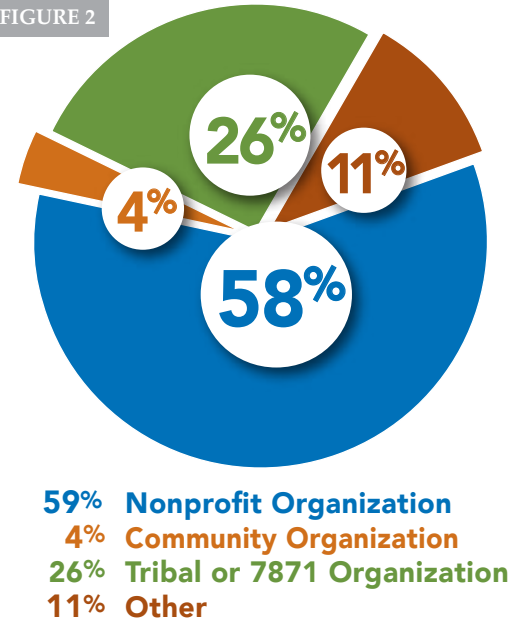
Twenty-six percent of programming was provided by tribal governments, but the majority of programming (63%) was provided through nonprofits and community groups (i.e., organizations without nonprofit status and not connected to tribal government). These data fall in line with the trends First Nations has seen from our NYCF where roughly two-thirds of applicants are from Native nonprofits and fiscally-sponsored Native community groups. Of the nonprofits contributing to the survey, 94% identified as Native-controlled organizations.<sup>9</sup>

## Organizational and Program Budgets

Overall, programs serving Native boys and young men generally operate with annual organizational budgets under \$250,000. Forty-nine percent of Native boys- and young men-serving nonprofit organizations<sup>10</sup> have annual organizational budgets of less than \$250,000; 12% range from \$250,000 to \$499,999; 19% range from \$500,000 to \$1,249,999 and 9% have annual organizational budgets ranging from \$1.25 million to \$2,499,999; 11% of organizations have budgets greater than \$2.5 million. Sixty-one percent of all nonprofit organizations that provide Native boys and young men programming have an annual organizational budget of less than \$500,000.

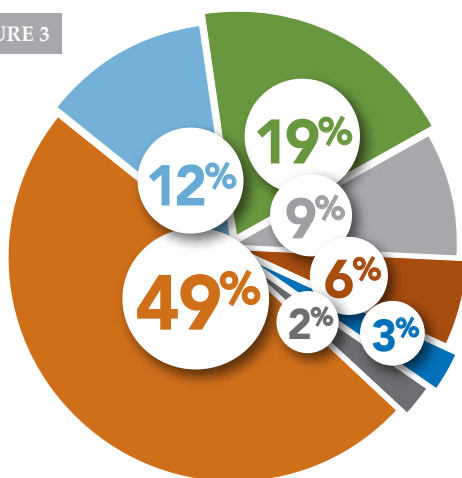
## Native Boys and Young Men Programming by Organization Type

FIGURE 2



## Organizational Budget of Native Boys and Young Men-Serving Nonprofits

FIGURE 3



49%	Under \$250,000
12%	\$250,000 - \$499,999
19%	\$500,000 - \$1,249,999
9%	\$1,250,000 - \$2,499,999
6%	\$2,500,000 - \$4,999,999
3%	\$5,000,000 - \$24,999,999
2%	\$25,000,000 - \$50,000,000

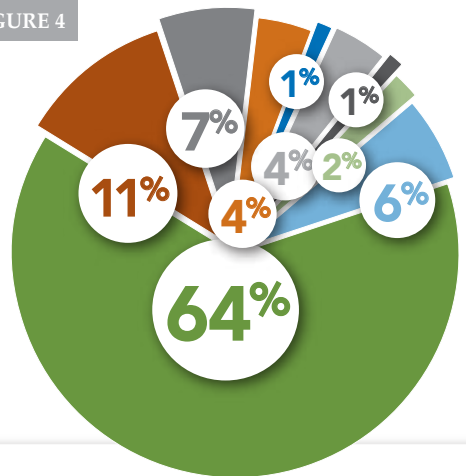
**61% of all nonprofit organizations that provide Native boys and young men programming have an annual organizational budget of less than \$500,000.**



Funding directly to Native boys and young men programming is incredibly lean. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of organizations have annual program budgets under \$15,000 to support Native boys and young men programming. Conversely, only 6% of organizations have program budgets over \$250,000 to support Native boys and young men programs. Moreover, over 4 in 5 organizations (82%) have program budgets under \$50,000 to support Native boys and young men programs. It is important to note that organizations with larger funds dedicated to Native boys and young men are generally supported by tribal governments or other federal programs (like workforce development) whereas organizations with smaller programmatic budgets are Native nonprofit organizations.

### Program Budget of Native Boys and Young Men-Serving Nonprofits

FIGURE 4



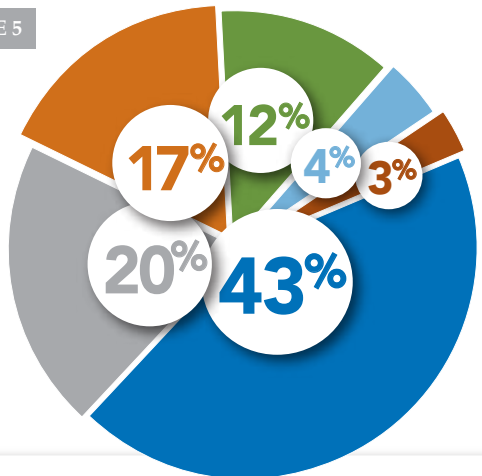
64%	Under \$15,000	4%	\$100,000 – \$149,999
11%	\$15,000 – \$29,999	1%	\$150,000 – \$199,999
7%	\$30,000 – \$49,999	2%	\$200,000 – \$250,000
4%	\$50,000 – \$74,999	6%	Over \$250,000
1%	\$75,000 – \$99,999		

### Organization and Program Staff Size

Total staff size of organizations that have Native boys and young men programming is small. 63% of respondents have nine or fewer organizational staff members. Seventeen percent of respondents have 10 to 19 total staff members and 20% of organizations have staff sizes of 20 or more.

### Organizations that Have Native Boys and Young Men Programming Total Staff Size

FIGURE 5



43%	1 – 4 staff members	12%	20 – 49 staff members
20%	5 – 9 staff members	4%	50 – 99 staff members
17%	10 – 19 staff members	3%	100 – 249 staff members



Looking at dedicated staffing to Native boys and young men programming, 67% of all responding organizations have one to four staff members dedicated to this kind of work. Fifteen percent reported having no dedicated staff to Native boys and young men programming, which means programs are either staffed by volunteers or by staff members who wear multiple hats within their organization, with this work only being part of that person's job. 13% of respondents noted they have five to nine dedicated staff and 5% have more than 10 dedicated staff for Native boys and young men program work.

Finally, to better understand the type of staff employed or available to organizations that serve Native boys and young men, our survey asked if organizations employ a grantwriter/resource development staff person, have a communications staff person, or have an evaluator on site. Thirty-six percent of respondents that have active Native boys and young men work have a grantwriter/resource development staff person; 18% have a communications staff person(s) and only 6% have an onsite evaluator. These positions are critical to grow and sustain programs and communicate and amplify program voice and outcomes. However, the majority of respondents do not have access to these critical kinds of staff members.

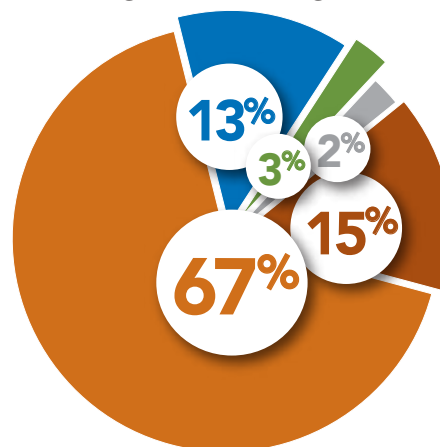
**These positions are critical to grow and sustain programs and communicate and amplify program voice and outcomes.**

### Programmatic Services

Our survey also wanted to get a better understanding of who is served by current Native boys and young men programming and the focus areas of these programs. The youth age ranges served by these programs have fairly equal representation across elementary (5-10), middle (11-13), and high school (14-18) aged youth along with young adults (18 and older). Significantly fewer programs serve boys younger than five years of age. The highest target audience is youth in high school, followed by programming targeting elementary and middle school aged boys and young men.

### Program Staff Size for Native Boys and Young Men Programming

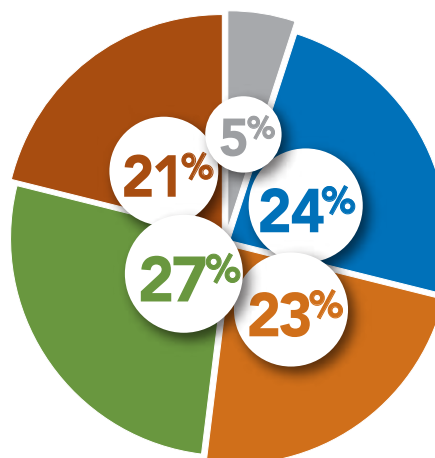
FIGURE 6



- 15% No Dedicated Staff
- 67% 1-4 Program Staff Members
- 13% 5-9 Program Staff Members
- 3% 10-19 Program Staff Members
- 2% More than 20 Program Staff Members

### Age Cohorts Targeted by Native Boys and Young Men Programming

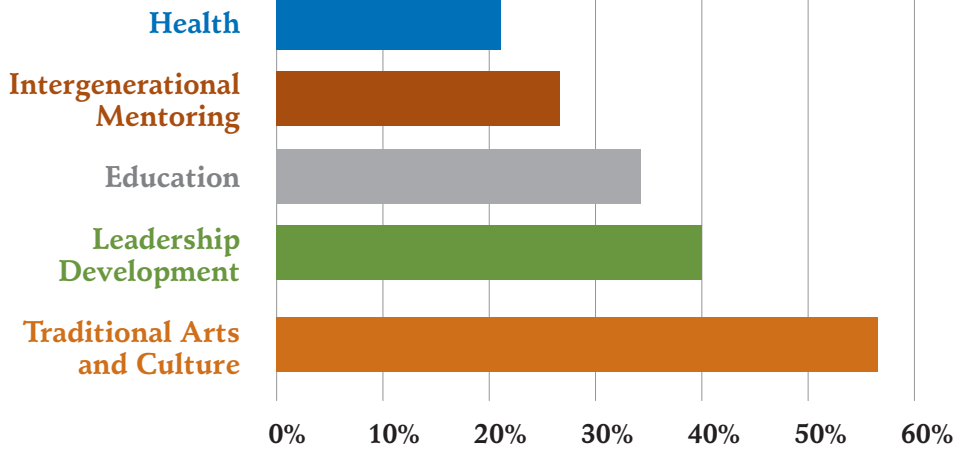
FIGURE 7



- 5% Pre-K (0-4)
- 24% Elementary (5-10)
- 23% Middle School (11-13)
- 27% High School (14-18)
- 21% Post High School (18 and older)

## Top Native Boys and Men Program Areas

FIGURE 8



How do these programs serve Native youth? Respondents were asked to identify up to three programming areas for Native boys and young men.<sup>11</sup> The top area of program service identified by programs that serve Native boys and young men is traditional arts and cultural programming – 56% of respondents noted this as an area of current programming. 40% of respondents noted that leadership development is a key area of program service, followed by education (34%), intergenerational mentoring (27%) and health (21%). Generally, these programmatic trends mirror funding requests that First Nations receives under its Native Youth and Culture Fund.<sup>12</sup> Important to note, the fourth most identified programmatic area by tribal governments or departments is recreational and sports programming targeting Native boys and men (as opposed to intergenerational mentoring).

## FUNDING for PROGRAMS that SUPPORT NATIVE BOYS and YOUNG MEN

In our survey, we asked respondents the following: “Please list the percentage breakdown of where your funding comes from for your program (should add to 100).” There were some significant differences in how tribal governments/ programs and nonprofits responded to this question.

### AVERAGE TRIBAL DEPARTMENT or ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET SOURCES

The majority of funding for tribal governments/programs supporting Native boys and young men comes directly from the tribe (49%) or federal support (35%). This was followed by state support (7%). Foundation funding only comprised 5% of tribal governments/programs support and individual donors (1%) and other supporters (3%) were even less.

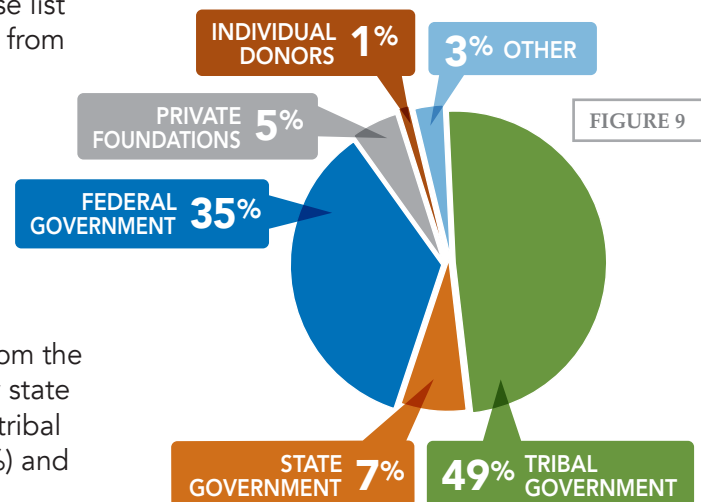
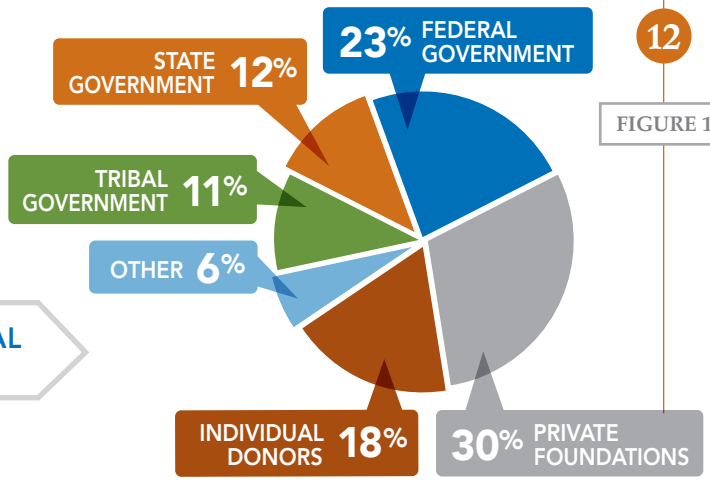


FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10

For the average nonprofit doing this work, the majority of support comes from private foundations (30%) and then federal grant programs (23%). On average, these organizations receive additional support from individuals donors (18%) and state governments (12%) followed by tribal governments (11%) and other supporters (6%)



**AVERAGE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET SOURCES**

**LARGE FOUNDATION SUPPORT of NATIVE YOUTH PROGRAMMING 2006-2014**

**313**

TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED

**\$50,050,856**

TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED

**\$45,000**

MEDIAN GRANT AMOUNT

**\$10,000,000**

LARGEST GRANT

**82**

NUMBER of UNIQUE FUNDERS SUPPORTING NATIVE YOUTH

**Philanthropic Giving to Native Youth**

There is no systematic data readily available to place specific numbers on the amount of private foundation or other grant funding that supports work targeting Native boys and young men. However, an analysis of large private foundation giving from 2006-2014, via the Foundation Center Grants data, does provide some insight, albeit limited, into large foundation support for Native youth programs overall.<sup>13</sup>

Analysis of these data documents that from 2006-2014, a total of 313 grants totaling just over \$50 million was provided to Native-controlled nonprofits or tribal governments by 82 different funders.<sup>14</sup> The median grant size was \$45,000 and the largest grant award totaled \$10 million.

Looking at the number of grants awarded, there is no clear front-runner in terms of funder. However, when we look at top givers by dollar amount, the Northwest Area Foundation accounts for 47% of funds granted or \$23,575,000. These funds went to four nonprofits and tribes and included one \$10 million grant. Kalliopeia Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation are the next highest givers totaling over \$2 million from 2006-2014.



**Top 10 Foundation Supporters of Youth-Related Programming in Native Communities by Dollars Awarded 2006-2014**

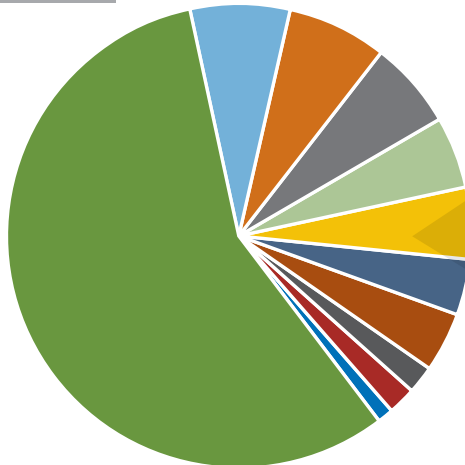
Northwest Area Foundation	\$23,575,000
Kalliopeia Foundation	\$2,588,000
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	\$2,184,000
Marguerite Casey Foundation	\$1,907,500
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	\$1,852,072
NoVo Foundation	\$1,800,000
The California Endowment	\$1,600,254
Bush Foundation	\$1,362,404
The Lemelson Foundation	\$1,295,567
The Christensen Fund	\$1,086,000

**Top 10 Foundation Supporters of Youth-Related Programming in Native Communities by Grants Awarded 2006-2014**

Otto Bremer Foundation	22
The California Endowment	22
O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, Inc.	19
Marguerite Casey Foundation	13
The Christensen Fund	13
Sierra Health Foundation	12
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	12
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	11
The McKnight Foundation	11
General Mills Foundation	10

**Grantmaker Support Areas for Native Youth**

FIGURE 11



PERCENTAGE of GRANTS for NATIVE YOUTH

- 57%** Youth Organizing
- 7%** Youth Mentoring
- 7%** Youth Services
- 6%** Youth Development
- 5%** Civics for Youth
- 5%** Community Service for Youth
- 4%** Intergenerational Mentoring
- 4%** Economics for Youth
- 2%** Agriculture for Youth
- 2%** Religion for Youth
- 1%** Adult and Child Mentoring
- 0%** Scouting Programs



In looking at what grantmakers support, the majority of funding was given to programs that support youth organizing. About 57% of grants were categorized under this label that seems to be a catch-all category for a variety of activities such as youth capacity building, human services and education programming. Other youth-focused areas that received support included mentoring, youth development and civics.

## A Safe Haven for Micmac Youth

Founded in 1995, the Penobscot Boys & Girls Club (PBGC) is the umbrella organization for three Boys & Girls Clubs in Maine – the Maliseet Boys & Girls Club, Sipayik Boys & Girls Club, and Boys & Girls Club of Presque Isle. The PBGC was the first Native American Boys & Girls Club to be established in the Northeast region of the United States. While today the organization overall serves more than 240 kids, both Native and non-Native, the Boys & Girls Club of Presque Isle is located in Micmac territory and designs programming specifically in line with the Aroostook Band of Micmacs.

The PBGC is funded by donations and grants, including from First Nations' Native Youth and Culture Fund. Funding in 2018 is supporting a project at the Boys & Girls Club of Presque Isle to increase engagement between Micmac youth and elders through interviews, talking circles and classes that pass down the practices, beliefs and values of the Micmac people.

Further funding from First Nations is building momentum for this project and the overall work of PBGC by adding to what we know about youth programming that impacts Native American boys and young men.

This type of funding is critical in keeping PBGC going, says Fenton Jones, PBGC Program Coordinator. "There's not any kind of services dedicated to teens in our area. We're trying to fill that void."

For staff of PBGC this means leading programs for character and leadership development, education and career development, sports and fitness, the arts, and health and life skills. On a day-to-day basis for teens, this might involve attending a PGBC Black Light Dance or a Teen Dating Violence Awareness program, or it may be just coming to the community center to hang out after school, says Jones.

This resource is imperative for several reasons. According to Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 15.1 million children are left unsupervised after school each day, a situation that can lead to increased dropout rates, poor health outcomes, crime and other unwanted behaviors. Boys & Girls Clubs of America further reports that Native youth are among the most vulnerable with higher rates than their peers across the board for poverty, suicide, alcoholism, obesity, diabetes and quitting high school.

Adding to this, Maine faces a "distressing rate" of drug overdose fatalities and the opioid epidemic continues to be "tearing apart Maine families and communities," according to the Maine Attorney General.



*Through the Penobscot Boys & Girls Club, youth learn about and draw strength from their heritage. Here, kids display regalia they made themselves in a special after-school class by a traditional artist who resides in the community.*



Through its mentoring program, academic support and community center, the PBGC provides a healthy pathway for kids at risk. “We’re able to reach kids who are on the streets, to connect with them before bad things happen. Then if bad things do happen, we provide support to help them through it,” says Jones. “We’re here in the community as a place to turn.”

Nichole Francis, CEO of PBGC, says that the organization is not just a safe space for youth of all ages to come and receive a hot meal or educational and prevention programming. “We are a place where lives are positively shaped and molded,” she says.

**“We build character – the type of character our community needs and strives to become.”**

In addition to funding overall operating costs, the First Nations grant has also supported the revitalization of the AmeriCorps VISTA position for the PBGC. VISTA stands for Volunteers in Service to America, and while the position is not paid, there are costs associated with facilitating the work.

The VISTA worker is based in the community and spends 40 hours each week focused on tribal resource development and direct outreach to the Native community about the kinds of support Native youth, especially boys, need. From there, the VISTA worker reports back to PBGC to plan events and guide programs that draw on the strengths of the Micmac culture.

This programming is essential for keeping the culture – and the language – alive for kids who are often not taught about it at home. Moreover, it is education that benefits not only Native youth, but also the non-Native community, says Jones. “So many of us don’t know the customs and cultural knowledge, but from these programs, we all have something to learn. Having this focus gets us all on the same page and helps us better respond to the community, which is what we’re here to do.”

Like other Native- and youth-serving organizations, the PBGC faces challenges in space and funding. While it has acquired a community center for after-school programming, classes and events, Jones says they’re quickly outgrowing their space. There is always a need to reach more kids, and with more kids comes the need to diversify programs to reach different ages and to add staff to lead the programs. All of this, Jones says, requires funding.

Still, they do what they can by getting creative with budgets and always collaborating and partnering with the community. “We’re blessed to have a lot of support and a lot of interaction with the people we serve,” he says.



*Cultural Director John Dennis teaches regular language classes at the Penobscot Boys & Girls Club.*



*Keeping the Micmac language alive is essential, especially for children in the community who may not be learning about their culture and heritage at home.*

## IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS

**Over one-third of organizations participating in the national survey indicated they offer gender-specific programming in some way, shape or form specifically for Native American boys and young men.** In general, these organizations serve youth fairly evenly between the ages of 5 and 18 and are efficient stewards of resources, especially considering their small budgets and staff sizes. Another half of respondents, or 174 organizations, indicated they offer only co-ed programming and do not have any type of gender-specific programming for either boys or girls. These numbers indicate that there are a wealth of programs that exist for Native American boys and young men.

The other significant strength is that **almost all survey respondents offering Native youth programming, and targeting boys and young men, are Native-controlled organizations,** which indicates that Native communities are committed to expanding work targeting Native youth, including work with Native boys and young men.

Focused discussions with organizations serving Native American boys and young men revealed that **these organizations have extensive networks with various local and regional partners.** These partnerships either provide funding or various in-kind resources (transportation, meeting space, programming partnerships, additional youth opportunities, etc.) in lieu of funding. Moreover, these organizations provide in-kind support and moral support and serve as a pipeline for youth entering or seeking additional programming options; this demonstrates the ingenuity of organizations in leveraging in-kind support to maximize their programs' resources and effectiveness.

When asked to identify potential future partnerships, many of these organizations are now looking to target new national partners as they seek to expand their programs and make them more sustainable.

Many of the nonprofit programs also cited that relationships with tribes have a significant impact on the success of programming. **Organizations that have strong, positive partnerships with their local and/or surrounding tribes have greater success in their program offerings and also engagement.** Moreover, nonprofits fill important gaps in programming for the tribe and have stronger community support. Conversely, nonprofits that have weak relationships with nearby tribes are viewed as competitors and, despite community support, struggle in achieving their program goals.

In our conversations with organizations serving Native American boys and young men, these organizations provided additional insight into how they would define and measure success, or rather how they would determine signs of strength in the future.

**The most important and cited measure of success for the future was that traditional culture be respected, practiced and valued by boys and young men.** Other signifiers of strength include:

- Developing the next generation of male leaders by having current mentees become mentors.
- Having strong tribal support for programs, particularly if it is a nonprofit program.
- Having strong participation and retention of boys of all ages in their programs.
- Hiring and retaining greater numbers of male staff.
- Ensuring consistency of programming through diversification of funding.

These signifiers should be seen as key goals and aspirations of programs serving Native American boys and young men and in many cases relate to overcoming the current challenges these groups face.

## IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES

Organizations serving Native American boys and young men face several key challenges in implementing and carrying out their programs for the long term:

- First, there is a **shortage of funding for Native youth programs** in general, making it even more difficult for organizations to provide gender-specific programming.
- The second major challenge is the **human capacity needed to provide these programs**. Organizations already struggle for sufficient funds, which undercuts staff sizes and impacts program sustainability and growth. Two-thirds of organizations relied on dedicated volunteers in order to carry out their programming.

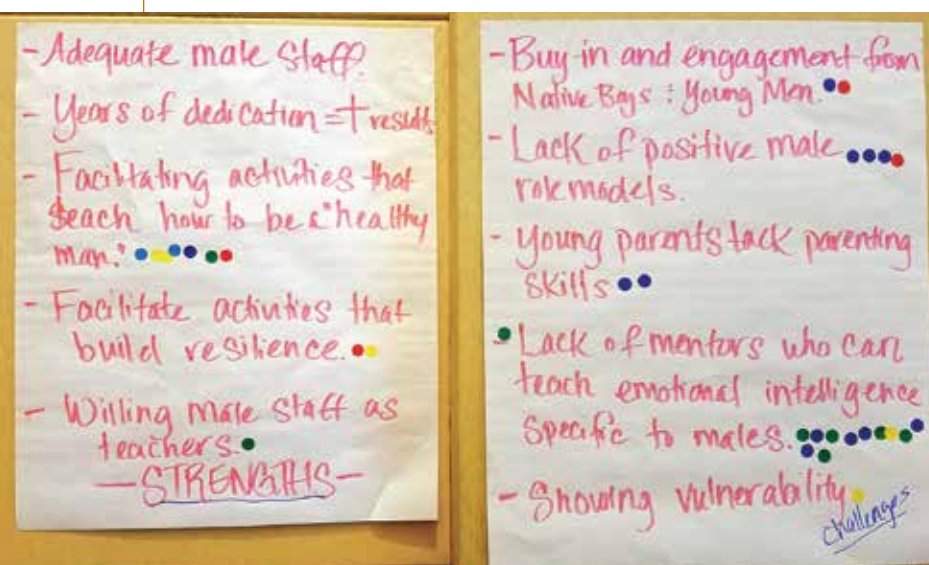
Finally, representatives from organizations targeting Native boys and young men identified that one significant program challenge is **finding positive male role models within the community who are equipped to take on mentoring positions**. More specifically, these organizations identified the challenge in finding mentors who can teach and demonstrate emotional intelligence specific to males. Associated with this challenge is a shared difficulty in retaining Native male staff in their organizations and retaining teenage boys in their programs. Many of these organizations noted they have access to multiple strong female culture bearers and mentors, but are limited in the number of Native men they have access to for these same areas. It has been shown that connecting youth with their culture raises self-esteem and when youth have representative images of themselves out in the world they are more likely to see that they can achieve and succeed. The value of growing more male Native mentors within these programs cannot be understated.

From the national survey, **organizations identified funding as their greatest need, especially general operating support and continued program support**. Focused discussions provided additional insights regarding the struggles that both tribes and Native nonprofits face in the way of funding.

One grantee participant described the vicious cycle that her organization falls into with its funding streams. Funders want to see evidence that their money is making a difference. Once some headway is made the funding ends. When funding ends, the data collection for that program may end along with any progress made. This makes it more difficult to achieve additional rounds of funding due to halted progress and lack of information. The national survey yielded similar issues regarding program-based funding. Organizations that had to discontinue their boys and men programming were asked to provide a reason for the program ending. Responses ranged from a lack of sustainable

funding to the grant cycle ending to programs wishing to include girls, which disqualified them for additional funds.

Other additional challenge areas identified through focused discussions included increasing family support and participation in programs, removing transportation barriers for youth to attend programs, and addressing larger systemic issues like public education on Native American history and accurate representation of Native peoples in mainstream media. These challenges are equally important and should not be discredited.





*SONS activities are positive, action-based and non-blaming. Here, boys enjoy an afternoon of bow shooting.*



*Chief Executive Officer Monte Randall explains how SONS serves to give back to the Muscogee Tribe. Here, a SONS volunteer reads to students at Glenpool Elementary School.*

## SONS of Mvskoke Model Stability, Steadiness, Presence

For men representing the values of respect and responsibility in rural Okmulgee, Oklahoma, the secret to success often comes down to just being there. It means coming together in support – and not in competition – as a steady, stable mentor and friend to the area’s young men and boys.

The SONS of Mvskoke began when several of its members first worked with the Muscogee Tribe in a family violence prevention initiative called Warriors Honor Women. Their focus was on involving men in solutions to protecting families. While that program eventually ran its course, questions remained about the causes of domestic violence.

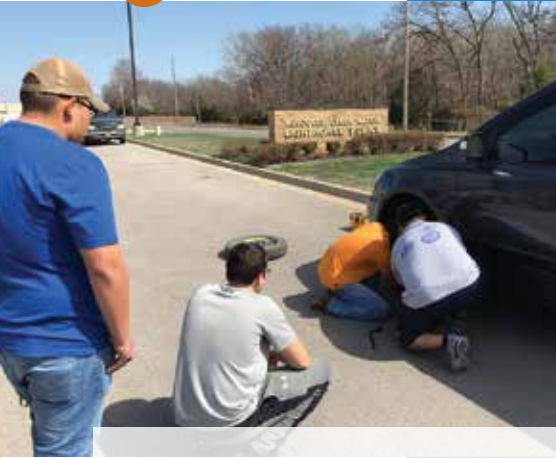
“We continued to see a need to get men together to talk about what we all face,” said SONS of Mvskoke Chief Executive Officer Monte Randall.

Indeed, there were few channels in Okmulgee for men to collaborate and support each other in ways that were non-competitive and not blame-based. The SONS decided to continue meeting and to formalize its own structure to support men and give back to the tribe. Its focus would be mentoring and community-based programs and events that bring men together in ways that show responsibility and respect.

As a newly formed 501(c)(3) organization, the SONS began hosting monthly events and activities open to the community based on the SONS’ four tenets: Spiritual, physical wellness, Native American culture and leadership. These events and activities are designed to encompass at least one of those tenets. For example, fishing trips or sporting events incorporate physical wellness, whereas planting an elders’ garden, bow shooting, language lessons and sweat lodges involve several of the tenets.

Through all the activities, Randall said, men are called on in an environment of respect and responsibility. “By leading these activities, we participate, we show up. We convey that this is what men do, and this is what is important to who we are as a people.”

Randall underscored the importance of this male presence not just in Okmulgee but throughout the country. There are a lot of homes with single-mother families, or grandparents raising the children, he said. “Having that structure of male involvement serves as a model for having dads in their homes.”



*The SONS of Mvskoke mentoring program teaches young men hands-on skills such as car maintenance.*



*A field trip to the Tulsa Boxing Gym brings young men and boys together in respect and responsibility.*

Fortunately, SONS of Mvskoke operates in a region steeped in Creek culture and cultural settings in which to hold these activities are prominent. Still, SONS seeks to build on that culture, giving young men and boys a sense of their identity when it comes to what they believe manhood is about. “We have to go up against society, in how society says men should be,” Randall said. “We need to be men from a cultural aspect. What were the roles of men a hundred years ago, and how do we need to be today?”

What was effective then, Randall explained, is that sense of community that SONS aims to impart. “It was about community service, putting people first. It was about respect for each other and our responsibility to give back.”

At the same time, bringing men together – even in a cultural setting – does present challenges. One of the biggest, Randall said, has been participation. Randall explained that its first focus as a formal organization was providing a mentoring program. Yet, as they started identifying youth, they quickly saw a problem finding older men.

“The mentors are supposed to be men,” Randall said. “But where were they? We needed to get men to the program too.”

Randall said he believes demands on men in the form of work, families, and other commitments make it difficult for many to participate. Yet, he said, if we don’t take time to come together, to reinforce that culture, we’ll never be able to show that respect and responsibility. “We have to see what it is and address it,” Randall said.

To that end, SONS is moving forward with positive, action-based, non-blaming programming, making events open and available for all who can come. He said sometimes many men come, and sometimes only a few people can show up, but either way, SONS continues to instill that presence.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2014, the Obama Administration launched the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative that sparked increased conversation and funding to boys and men of color on a national scale. At the same time, President Obama noted that the challenges that Native youth face is “nothing short of a national emergency” after his visit to the Rosebud Indian Reservation and hearing from Native youth. Much of the literature and discussion on this topic is centered on African-American and Hispanic boys and young men. The literature on Native American boys and men has been sparse and limited at best. This report is an attempt to provide additional insight and recommendations for how funders and other key stakeholders can better support organizations serving Native American boys and young men.

## Funders Seeking to Invest in Native Boys and Young Men Programs

A wealth of opportunities exists for funders to invest in Native boys and young men programs. As noted earlier, these programs are often constrained by their budgets, funding restrictions and the human capacity needed to implement and carry out their programming. To better direct funders to the greatest areas of need, survey respondents were asked to rank various areas of funding<sup>15</sup> and technical assistance<sup>16</sup> needed to build their organization's capacity. Funders and other stakeholders interested in better supporting efforts and programs targeting Native American boys and young men should use these funding and technical assistance areas as a starting point for where to focus their work.

The funding areas that rose to the top reflect the challenges identified by organizations in terms of the need for long-term support of programs, less-restrictive funding and building human capital within their organizations. **First Nations recommends that funders seeking to invest in Native boys and young men work target the following six funding areas:**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1   General Operating Support  | 4   Program Development                     |
| 2   Continuing Program Support | 5   Leadership and Professional Development |
| 3   Financial Sustainability   | 6   Engagement, Outreach and Communications |

Funders also need to consider the benefits of supporting existing and new programs over longer periods of time. There is a huge need for extended support so that organizations have the time to achieve and sustain long-lasting impacts. With this comes a need to receive less-restrictive funding so that organizations can grow their capacities where needed and allow for program growth and change. Philanthropic resources are limited in Native American communities and many organizations provide co-ed options along with gender-specific programming for their youth. Furthermore, unlike other minority groups, programming for Native girls and young women is also limited, highlighting the extent to which funders may want to focus on Native youth programming in general.

Technical assistance needs also reflect areas with a great need for program sustainability and providing professional development opportunities for organizational staff and leadership. **For funders seeking to invest in technical assistance and training to build organizational capacity, First Nations recommends the following top three areas of need:**

- 1 | Program Sustainability
- 2 | Professional Development of Staff and Leadership
- 3 | Program Expansion

More specifically, funders and other key stakeholders may need to target mentoring initiatives that provide support and development not only for youth but for mentors as well. Organizations need to be able to increase the base of Native men within their communities who have the skills and capacity to support their programs. Programs cannot expand with limited human capital. This is integral to moving these programs forward in new and innovative ways.

## Tribal Governments and Nonprofits

A great amount of work is already being done by tribes and Native nonprofits to provide programming for the youth in their communities, including Native boys and young men. As long as funding remains limited in Native communities, tribes and nonprofits must continue to pool their resources and form effective partnerships to deliver programming and serve the needs of their community members.

Native nonprofits in particular must be conscious of their relationships with tribal governments and seek to establish supportive partnerships. For nonprofit organizations that participated in our convening, almost all indicated that relationships with tribes have a significant impact on the success of their programming through strong community support and complementing existing tribal programs or filling in programming gaps.

# Conclusion



FIRST NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Tribal leaders and organizations are using traditional knowledge and innovative solutions to support Native boys and young men, and positively transform Indian Country. These efforts would not be possible without grantmakers, policymakers, tribes, communities and other stakeholders dedicated to improving the lives of Native boys and young men.

First Nations' national survey offers much-needed insight on programs serving Native boys and young men. As indicated by this report, these programs tend to be underfunded and overstretched, often operating with limited resources, both in staff size and budget. Because of limited resources and inconsistent funding sources, programs serving Native boys and young men are scarce and short lived, thus hindering their development. Moreover, organizations are in need of resources to train and develop mentors. This includes equipping men already in the community with the skills to take on mentoring positions and building a pipeline for boys and young men in programs to become future mentors.

Despite these many challenges, tribes and Native-led organizations continue to forge ahead, using the strength of their cultural traditions to develop innovative solutions to empower Native boys and young men. As DIW Executive Director Louise Matson points out in her interview, "We know how to heal ourselves. Customs like sweat lodges and dark-room ceremonies are part of our culture, but they also are positive rituals that draw on strengths. This makes them powerful tools for boys and young men."

Tribes and Native-led organizations already have the knowledge and expertise needed to strengthen and heal their communities. Unfortunately, they do not always have access to the funds and resources needed to harness and share their cultures, languages and traditions with younger generations. We hope the information presented here will assist philanthropy's efforts in supporting programs that serve Native boys and young men.

**"We know how to heal ourselves. Customs like sweat lodges and dark-room ceremonies are part of our culture, but they also are positive rituals that draw on strengths. This makes them powerful tools for boys and young men."**



## WORKS CITED

Benally, Moroni. "Advancing Positive Paths for Native American Boys & Young Men: A Project Evaluation." First Nations Development Institute, 2016, [www.firstnations.org/publications/advancing-positive-paths-for-native-american-boys-young-men-a-project-evaluation/](http://www.firstnations.org/publications/advancing-positive-paths-for-native-american-boys-young-men-a-project-evaluation/).

Seelau, Ryan. "Regaining Control over the Children: Reversing the Legacy of Assimilative Policies in Education, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice that Targeted Native American Youth." *American Indian Law Review*, Vol 41, No. 2, 2012, [digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol37/iss1/3/](http://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/ailr/vol37/iss1/3/).

"Supporting Our Native Boys & Young Men." National Congress of American Indians, NCAI Policy Research Center, Feb. 2014, [www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NativeBoysBackgrounder.pdf](http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NativeBoysBackgrounder.pdf).

**1** *Regaining Control over the Children: Reversing the Legacy of Assimilative Policies in Education, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice that Targeted Native American Youth*, pg. 66.

**2** *Ibid.*, pg. 67-71.

**3** "Advancing Positive Paths for Native Boys and Young Men," pgs. 2-3.

**4** *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

**5** *Native Boys and Young Men Backgrounder*, NCAI (<http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/prc-publications/NativeBoysBackgrounder.pdf>)

**6** First Nations is only able to provide funding to approximately 10% of NYCF requests annually.

**7** First Nations received 332 completed responses, though 528 individuals started the survey for a completion rate of 63%.

**8** The dataset provided in this report is specific to those organizations and tribal departments that indicated they had specific programming for Native American boys and young men at the time of their response. It is worth noting that the survey also collected responses for organizations and departments previously serving Native boys and young men that no longer have youth programs (11) or moved to co-ed only programming (42). Of the 115 responses, 67 are nonprofits, 30 are tribal programs, 5 are community groups, and 13 are other types of entities like public school programs.

**9** First Nations defines Native-controlled to mean that the majority (or 51%) of board members are affiliated with a Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian community and whose sole mission is to serve Native communities.

**10** Organizational budgets for tribes are excluded from this section as some tribes provided departmental budgets and others provided organizational budgets for the entire tribe. 40% of tribal respondents reported organizational budgets less than \$250,000.

**11** The following response categories were: agriculture, fishing and/or forestry, traditional arts and culture, community and economic, development education, health (including traditional medicine/healing), human/social rights, family services, jobs/employment, housing/shelter services, peer mentoring, intergenerational mentoring, communications/media, leadership development, abuse prevention, legal services, sports and recreation, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, other (please specify).

**12** From 2015-2017 the top four requested programming areas under the NYCF were 1) ceremonial, spiritual and/or traditional, 2) youth leadership/empowerment, 3) multi-generational and/or mentoring, and 4) education.

**13** Taken from the Foundation Center Top 1000 Funders from 2016-2014.

**14** Examining youth giving by foundations in the "Grants" data have some methodological issues. First, the only way to look at giving to youth causes is via the subject code. Naturally these codes may be misleading or may miscategorize the true intent of a grant. The most significant issue has to do with missing data – 47% of grants in the dataset have no subject code. Nonetheless, despite these limitations, the "Grants" data is the most expansive giving data and does give some indication (albeit limited) on giving trends overall.

**15** The 11 options available were: capital and infrastructure; leadership and professional development; general operating support; engagement, outreach and communications; policy and advocacy; program development; continuing program support; research; evaluation; financial sustainability (fundraising, annual campaigns, sponsorships, etc.); and other (not listed).

**16** Our survey provided 12 different technical assistance options including the following: general management, financial management, fundraising/revenue development, communications/marketing, project management, evaluation, programming sustainability, programming expansion, board governance, professional development for staff and leadership, research, and other.





# FIRST NATIONS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

2432 Main Street, 2nd Floor | Longmont, CO 80501 • (303) 774-7836

PROGRAM CONTACT

**Kendall Tallmadge, MA, MBA** | *Ho-Chunk*

LEAD GRANTS OFFICER

First Nations Development Institute

[ktallmadge@firstnations.org](mailto:ktallmadge@firstnations.org)

[www.firstnations.org](http://www.firstnations.org)