

2020

IMPACT REPORT



RESILIENCE
RELATIONSHIPS
ADAPTABILITY



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



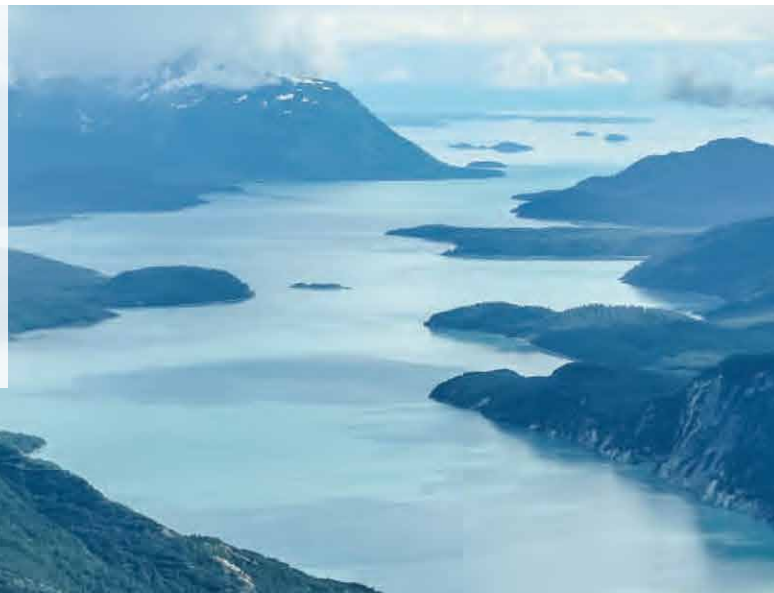
MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen American Indian economies to support healthy Native communities. We invest in and create innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities.

WE BELIEVE...

When armed with the appropriate resources, Native peoples hold the capacity and ingenuity to ensure the sustainable, economic, spiritual and cultural well-being of their communities.

– *Our Guiding Principle*
THE CORE of ALL OUR WORK



ASSET-BUILDING A LONG-TERM VISION



Since 1980, First Nations Development Institute has been committed to strengthening **tribal assets**. We partner with Native nations and communities to restore control of those assets and their culturally compatible stewardship.

As a positive and collaborative approach, asset-building focuses on cultivating traditional knowledge and practices to build healthy, vibrant Native communities. **This approach takes a comprehensive view of assets**, which include:

Natural Resources



Cultural Heritage



Human Capital



Physical Assets



Institutional Assets



Social Capital



Legal & Political Assets




Creative Assets

“Through the decades, we have learned that asset-based development truly works and is an effective strategy for preserving community resources for the next seven generations. We believe that it is only through Native control of Native assets that the economic well-being of Native communities will be improved and sustained.”


— Michael E. Roberts | Tlingit | PRESIDENT & CEO




WHY ASSET- BUILDING WORKS



By building assets, tribal communities can improve the well-being of their residents and move toward self-sufficiency.



Through effective asset deployment, Native communities can continually generate income and other resources, thereby ensuring the creation and maintenance of wealth as they define. In times of economic stress, assets provide security and stability, protecting Native communities from future crises.



First Nations' work has, and continues to be, based on the assertion that it is only through control of their assets can Native communities truly thrive.

We believe that Native Nations are uniquely knowledgeable about their own communities. They know best their own strengths, challenges, and needs. Asset-building bolsters the effectiveness of Native Nations to develop solutions to their own challenges and allows them to best leverage resources on their own terms and develop their own solutions.

OUR CORE STRATEGIES

DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE ENTIRE
ECOSYSTEM OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE



DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT
through GRANTMAKING

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & TRAINING

ADVOCATING for SYSTEMIC CHANGE:
POLICY & ADVOCACY

BEING A GOOD RELATIVE

In a year marked by devastating loss in Native communities, First Nations' core work as a grantmaker, educator, advocate and connector was more critical than ever.

Our team recognized the scale of health and economic crisis in Native communities early on and led with one thing in mind:

How can we be a good relative?

In times of need, Native people have always supported our relatives without being asked. That's how we have survived and thrived since time immemorial. In March 2020, First Nations leadership met virtually with community partners to identify needs to ensure Native communities were not left behind. Those needs were, and continue to be, far-reaching. They include:

- Access to food and water
- General operating funds, as 66% of Native nonprofit organizations reported that they provide direct services to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Access to technology to convert programming online and ensure youth can attend school
- Access to Personal Protective Equipment

The core strategies and programs that First Nations has implemented for four decades and the strong traditions of relationship building and trust positioned the organization to step up and help where needed to support grassroots initiatives.

"Trust is the cornerstone of effective relationships. We heard from community partners that providing general operating support with as little administrative work as possible is what was needed, so that's what we did. Our supporters and allies across the country and the world responded with compassion and generosity. We are truly humbled by the trust and outpouring of support in this time of great need."

— Raymond Foxworth | Navajo
VICE PRESIDENT of GRANTMAKING, DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

2020 IMPACT

EDUCATE
Grassroots
Practitioners

89

TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE SUPPORT

37,592

PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH PROGRAMS

53

TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED for
CONFERENCES and CONVENINGS
(PRIOR to COVID)

25

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED
to STUDENTS

PIVOT The last in-person gathering First Nations hosted was the Luce Indigenous Knowledge Fellows gathering February 19, 2020. Since then, First Nations has offered many of its trainings and convenings on virtual platforms.

ADVOCATE
Systemic Change

15

PUBLICATIONS

4,447

PUBLICATIONS DOWNLOADED from
ONLINE KNOWLEDGE CENTER

PIVOT First Nations documented the challenges faced by Native communities in its 2020 report *Charting a Path Forward: The Native Nonprofit Sector and the COVID-19 Pandemic*, with the goal of directing more resources from the philanthropic community to Native communities. Download it here: firstnations.org/knowledge-center

2020 IMPACT

Creating the COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

100% of funds went directly to Native communities*

427

CAPITALIZE Native Communities

NUMBER of GRANTS FUNDED
(136 PROGRAM GRANTS,
291 EMERGENCY GRANTS)

\$6.5 M

TOTAL AMOUNT of GRANTS FUNDED
(\$3.4 M PROGRAM GRANTS,
\$3.1 M EMERGENCY GRANTS)

PIVOT Rapid response was critical at the onset of the pandemic. First Nations doubled the amount it invested in almost any given year with nearly half of funds dedicated to unrestricted or general operating relief support.

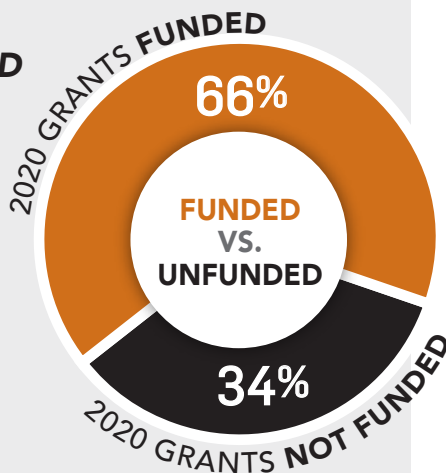
221

UNMET NEED

NUMBER of GRANTS
NOT FUNDED

\$5.6 M

AMOUNT of
UNMET NEED



COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

16

Rounds of
Grant Support

291

Grants Funded

\$3,139,000

Grants Distributed

17,749

Pounds of Food
Donated

\$335,670

Value of Personal
Protective
Equipment
Donated

28,000

Gallons of
Water Donated

NOTE: Through local, regional and national partnerships, First Nations helped coordinate water, food and Personal Protective Equipment donations to Native communities.

LISTEN DEEPLY

First Nations leadership met virtually with grassroots partners in March 2020 to better understand immediate and urgent needs.

APPLY LEARNINGS

All grants were unrestricted to use how communities saw fit and did not require an application.

MOVE RAPIDLY

First Nations' COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund committee worked to release funds efficiently and swiftly to communities, getting funds disbursed in 16 grant cycles in 9 months.

CONTINUE to ADDRESS SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

First Nations will continue to advocate for change to address severe inequities while publishing research that illuminates the health, economic and other disparities that results in policy change.

*First Nations did not take any administrative or implementation costs from COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund donations in 2020. Visit firstnations.org/covid-19-emergency-response-fund/ to get updates for 2021 disbursements and impact.



- **STEWADING** Native Lands
(New program in 2020)
- **INVESTING** in Native Youth
- **STRENGTHENING** Tribal & Community Institutions

OUR PROGRAMS

BUILDING ASSETS
in NATIVE COMMUNITIES

- **ADVANCING** Household & Community Asset-Building Strategies
- **NOURISHING** Native Foods & Health
- **ACHIEVING** Native Financial Empowerment

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project

For Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP), the pandemic meant immediately pivoting their many youth programs to virtual platforms while staying focused on their mission — **to help Zuni youth grow into strong and healthy adults**. The move included transitioning their signature annual summer program to the Safe@Home Summer Camp. With the new format they could continue the critical program, engaging 120 young campers and 18 counselors in meaningful summertime activities. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, campers reported feeling healthy and happy as a result of camp participation. To learn more and invest directly, visit zyep.org.

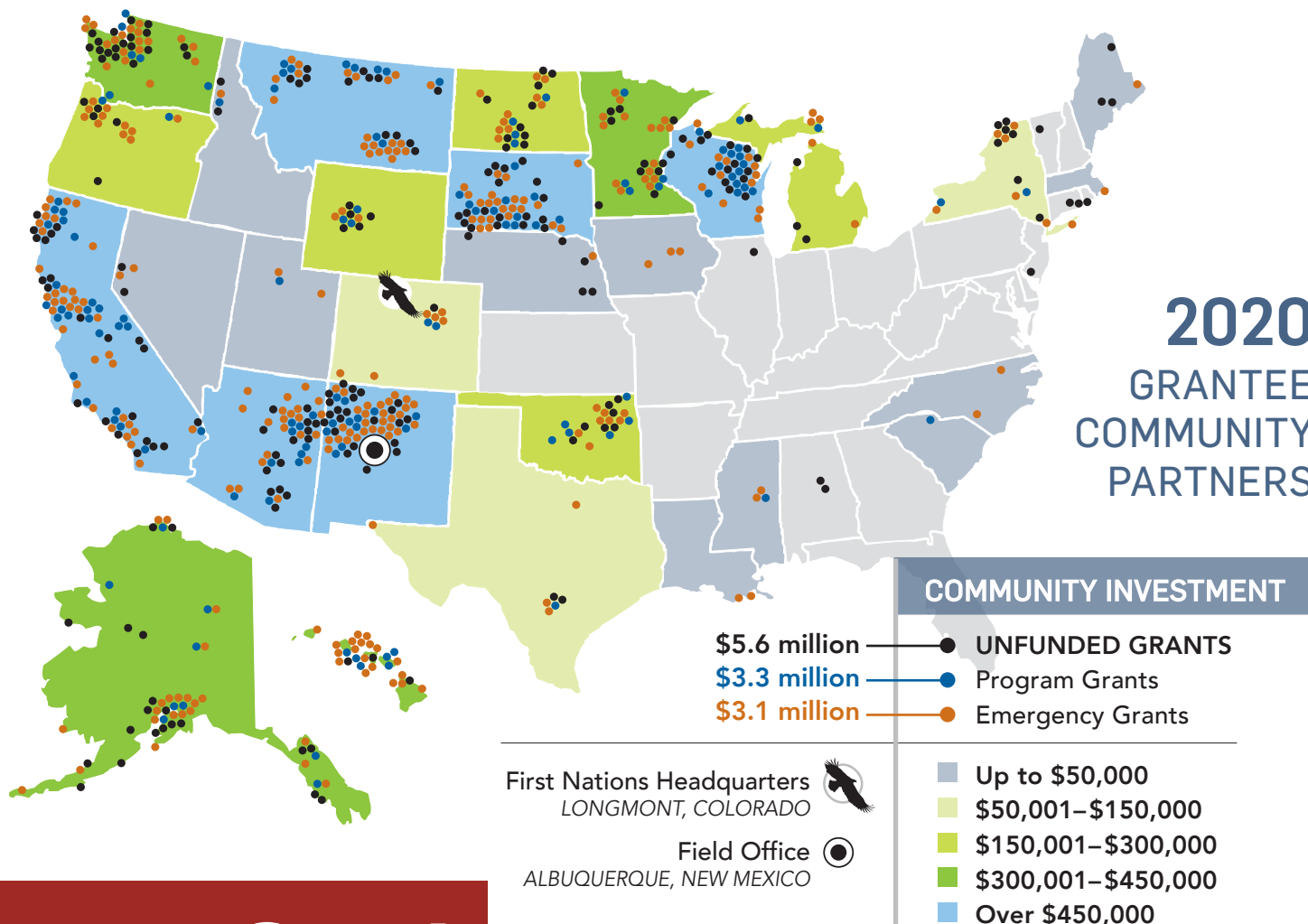
2020

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Yuchi Language Project

For the Yuchi Language Project, a non-profit designed as a living language habitat to produce a new generation of Yuchi speakers, COVID-19 only strengthened the importance of their work. "When we speak our own language, we embody our Indigenous culture and worldview like our ancestors," said Halay Turning Heart, Project Administrator. When the pandemic hit, the organization adapted quickly in transitioning programs to distance learning platforms. At the same time, they called on their committed families to implement home language nests. Moving forward, Yuchi Language Project will continue to focus on curriculum development projects that will have a lasting impact on the life of the language. To learn more about Yuchi Language Project and invest directly, visit yuchilanguage.org.

2020 GRANTEE COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Q&A

with First Nations President & CEO: **Michael E. Roberts**

Tell me about First Nations' approach to grantmaking for its COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund.

Only 4/10th of one percent of funding invested by private foundations goes to Native causes. Further, half of those funds go to non-Native controlled institutions such as museums and higher education. Thus, grassroots initiatives led by and for Native people get left behind. This longstanding inequity means that many Native communities did not have the infrastructure needed to effectively respond when the pandemic hit in March. So, we just expanded what we have been doing for decades — trusting our community partners to fight the good fight in their communities. Our COVID-19 response funds have been disbursed exactly the same way.

How have First Nations' three strategies of capitalizing, educating and advocating guided the organization and its emergency response fund efforts?

These three focus areas have always placed us in direct relationship and conversation with Native communities — these strategies were not something we made up sitting around a conference table: they were informed by community leaders. For us, the hallmark of our effectiveness has always been our closeness to the grassroots and grasstop organizations we serve. This relationship informed our strategies and it informed our COVID-19 relief efforts.

What is the most important thing you learned (or relearned) about your community partners through First Nations' response efforts?

We have always acted from the place that our community partners are the best placed, the most informed, and the most creative in solving the challenges in their communities. Our relief efforts reinforce this belief. In every case, our funds have gone out to communities with no strings attached. At the end of the day, this is a business of trust and we implicitly trust our community partners.

OUR COMMITMENT TO

Transparency & Accountability

A Message from First Nations' Board Chair to Our Supporters & the Communities We Serve...

You can be sure every donation is used effectively and wisely to promote strong, healthy and culturally vibrant Native communities. We are proud that for the ninth year in a row, First Nations has received the highest rating of **Four Stars from Charity Navigator**. Only 4% of the charities it rates in the U.S. achieve this highest distinction for nine or more consecutive years.

In 2020, First Nations again earned the **Platinum GuideStar Nonprofit Profile Seal of Transparency**, the highest level of recognition offered by GuideStar.

First Nations is also an Accredited Member of the **Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance**. Further, **81%** of donated dollars to First Nations go directly to our programs and the communities that need this support the most.

9 YEARS IN A ROW



bbb.org/charity

Digital versions of First Nations' full Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements can be found at firstnations.org/our-values/financial-information/.



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

firstnations.org

303.774.7836

info@firstnations.org

2432 Main Street, 2nd Floor
Longmont, Colorado 80501



Board of Directors

100% of OUR BOARD
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Marguerite Smith | Shinnecock
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Susan Jenkins | Choctaw
TREASURER

Shyla Sheppard | Mandan/Hidatsa
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For a complete list of board
members and biographies, visit
firstnations.org/about/board.

Leadership Team



Michael E. Roberts, M.B.A.
Tlingit
PRESIDENT & CEO
mroberts@firstnations.org



Raymond Foxworth, Ph.D.
Navajo
VICE PRESIDENT
GRANTMAKING, DEVELOPMENT
& COMMUNICATIONS
rfoxworth@firstnations.org



Jackie Francke, B.S.
Navajo
VICE PRESIDENT PROGRAMS
& ADMINISTRATION
jfrancke@firstnations.org

This report was developed by Raymond Foxworth, Ph.D., and Amy Jakober of the First Nations Communications team in partnership with Eileen Egan of Melvin Consulting PLLC.