

Colorado Foundations

and their Support of

Native American Community-based Nonprofits

This report is exclusively focused on levels of giving by foundations in Colorado to Native American organizations that serve local Native American communities within Colorado. We refer to these organizations in this report as Colorado Native American community-based organizations. The two Native nations in the state of Colorado are also included within this definition. We do not include giving to the numerous national Native American organizations that do important work in the state, as most of their services are provided outside the state of Colorado and are national in scope and reach.

INTRODUCTION

This report aims to provide an understanding of the relationship between Colorado foundations and Native American community-based and Native American-serving organizations in the state. More specifically, this report analyzes foundation giving by the top 20 philanthropic foundations in Colorado to Native American community-based organizations in the state.

To do this, researchers examined each foundation's IRS Form 990, Part XV, which contains the grants and contributions paid during the year. Moreover, researchers interviewed the executive directors of eight of the largest community-based Native nonprofits in Colorado and asked them 20 questions about their services and their interactions, relationships, barriers, and adequacy of funding from local foundations, as well as what additional services they could provide with more funding. Organizations interviewed are located along the Colorado Front Range, from Fort Collins to Pueblo, and primarily serve Native Americans within the state.

Overall, our research documents that Native American community-based organizations in Colorado are invisible within the giving portfolios of foundations in the state.

Only one-tenth of one percent (.1%) of Colorado philanthropy is awarded to Native American community-based organizations in Colorado.



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Moreover, findings from our qualitative interviews document that Native nonprofit leaders report negative experiences in their interactions with philanthropic institutions in the state.

This dismal level of giving to Native organizations doing important community-based work mirrors national giving trends in which less than one quarter of one percent of foundation dollars flow to Native-led organizations.¹ This grim statistic is also similar for community- and place-based foundations that give similarly low levels to Native American communities and causes.²

Similarly, the negative experiences that Native American leaders report in their interactions with individuals working in philanthropy in the state mirror negative experiences of Native American nonprofit leaders nationally. Other research by the Center for Effective Philanthropy and First Nations Development Institute both document that Native American nonprofit leaders report having significantly more negative reactions than other groups in the sector.³

Beyond the giving portfolios of foundations, Native Americans also remain invisible in terms of serving on the board or on the staff of foundations. The most recent data from Change Philanthropy notes that nearly 55% of foundations are staffed by white people.⁴ Moreover, foundation CEOs and boards are white dominated. Today, there are only an estimated 35 to 40 Native American individuals working in philanthropy, and most of them are concentrated within foundations located in the Midwest. In Colorado, there are fewer than three Native people serving on the boards of Colorado-based foundations.

This report builds on these studies in hopes of providing pathways to advance more collaborative relationships and partnerships between Colorado philanthropy and Native organizations and communities in the state.

NATIVE PEOPLE in What is Today Called Colorado

- There are seven tribes that ceded treaty land to the US government within the state of Colorado, including the Shoshone, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Kiowa Apache Tribes, and 12 bands of the Ute Tribe
- Due to the illegal proclamation presented in 1864 by territorial Governor Evans, there are no reservations along the Front Range of Colorado
- Beginning in the late 1950s, as part of an assimilation process, the US government began to relocate Native Americans to urban areas; as such, Denver has a large urban Native population
- According to the Federal Census Bureau, the American Indian and Alaska-Native population in Colorado is 74,129 based on the 2020 census
- The Colorado American Indian and Alaska-Native population is growing, with a 32% increase from 2010 to 2020
- In Colorado, 1.3% of the population identifies as American Indian and Alaska-Native alone, and 3.6% of the population identifies as American Indian and Alaska-Native in combination with other identities

NOTE Data was taken from the following sources: Royce, Charles C. (1899). "Indian Land Cessions in the United States."

Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1896-1897.

Washington Government Printing Office. Moe, Clark, August 19, 2019. **This tribal elder helped remove 157-year-old proclamations used to incite Sand Creek Massacre, Colorado Newsline.** Also from U.S. Census data and State of Colorado data.

GIVING to Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations by Colorado Philanthropy

To understand giving by Colorado-based foundations to Native organizations serving Native populations in the state, we examined levels of giving by the top 20 Colorado foundations listed in Appendix Table 1, based on each foundation's public IRS Form 990, Part XV, which contains the foundation's grants and contributions paid during the year. We looked at giving between 2016 and 2018 — the most consistent years reported by Guidestar. In total, the top 20 Colorado-based foundations granted approximately \$1.4 billion from 2016 to 2018. Full methodology notes are in the appendix.

FINDING 1

Only one-tenth of one percent (.1%) of Colorado philanthropy is awarded to Colorado Native American community-based organizations. Table 1 ranks the foundations in the sample by amount given to Colorado Native American community-based organizations. Overall, \$1.4 million was awarded to Native organizations from 2016 to 2018.

FINDING 2

The vast majority of Colorado-based foundations are not giving to Native American community-based organizations. Unfortunately, 15 of the 20 (75%) of the top foundations did not provide any funding for Native organizations during the reviewed period.

FINDING 3

Giving to Colorado Native American community-based organizations in the state is concentrated in the portfolios of a small number of foundations and heavily concentrated in the portfolios of two Colorado foundations. The Colorado Health Foundation gave \$1,037,314, or 72% of total grants made, over the identified period to Colorado Native American community-based organizations. The Denver Foundation awarded \$252,128 or 18% of total grants awarded to Colorado Native American community-based organizations.

The Colorado Health Foundation and the Denver Foundation combined awarded 90% of the total funding to Colorado Native American community-based organizations from 2016 to 2018. The Colorado Trust and Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation awarded grants to Native American community-based organizations totaling less than \$70,000 each.



Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations by Amount and Percentage of Total Funding Allocated

TABLE 1

Colorado Foundation	2016–2018 Dollars Awarded to Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations	Percentage of Foundation Budget Contributed to Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations	Percentage of Total Giving Awarded to Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations
The Colorado Health Foundation	\$1,037,314	0.4%	72%
The Denver Foundation	\$252,128	0.1%	18%
The Anschutz Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
The Daniels Fund	–	0.0%	0%
El Pomar Foundation	\$34,250	0.1%	2%
Gates Family Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	\$66,000	0.1%	5%
The Gill Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Rose Community Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Boettcher Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Bohemian Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Community Foundation of Northern Colorado	–	0.0%	0%
The Aspen Community Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
The Colorado Trust	\$49,200	0.2%	3%
The Community Foundation Boulder County	–	0.0%	0%
The Louis Calder Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
Adolph Coors Foundation ¹	–	0.0%	0%
Global Greengrants Fund	–	0.0%	0%
Henry P. Crowell and Susan C. Crowell Trust	–	0.0%	0%
Western Union Foundation	–	0.0%	0%
TOTAL	\$1,438,892	0.1%²	100%

¹ The Adolph Coors Foundation was the top-ranked entity in terms of percentage of internal budget allocated to Native American community-based organizations at .6%, which was funding grants made to the American Indian College Fund. The American Indian College Fund was intentionally omitted from this analysis because it is a national nonprofit that provides financial support for Native American students and tribal colleges and universities across the country.

² Denotes giving to Colorado Native American community-based organizations divided by total foundation grants.

Native American Community-based Organizations that **RECEIVED SUPPORT** from **Colorado Foundations**

Table 2 outlines the amount of funding provided to Native organizations and the percentage of funds allocated to each organization. Denver Indian Health and Family Services was the most supported organization in our dataset from 2016 to 2018. Approximately 80% of total funding to Native American community-based organizations was awarded to three organizations: Denver Indian Health and Family Services, Denver Indian Center, and Denver Indian Family Resource Center.



Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations or Programs by Funding Awarded

TABLE 2

RANK	NATIVE NONPROFIT	PERCENTAGE of TOTAL
1	Denver Indian Health and Family Services (DIHFS)	32.4%
2	Denver Indian Center	24.5%
3	Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC)	24.2%
4	Southern Ute Community Action	11.6%
6	Ute Mountain tribe	4.7%
6	State Historical Society of Colorado	1.7%
7	Colorado Springs Indian Center	0.2%
8	Native American Cultural Program	0.2%
9	Koshare Indian Museum	0.5%
10	Poudre River Library	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%

Qualitative Interviews with Colorado Native American Community-based Organization Leaders

Relationships

Interviews revealed that the relationships between the local Native nonprofits are mixed.

Some nonprofit leaders reported having positive experiences with specific individuals at a few foundations in the state. An overwhelming majority of individuals noted that most foundations in the state have very little understanding of Native people and communities in Colorado. Native nonprofit leaders noted they feel invisible relative to other groups and geographies in the state.

Some leaders reported that some foundation representatives have noted openly that “they didn’t know their organization existed” — despite many of these Native organizations being leaders in serving Native individuals and families and having been in operation for many years. These comments reflect the level of invisibility of Colorado Native American community-based organizations in the state.

Native leaders talked about a lack of transparency and open communication between foundations and Native nonprofits. Many expressed frustrations that funding requests submitted to Colorado foundations are often rejected for unknown reasons, with little feedback or guidance on ways to improve future proposals.

Finally, the majority of Native leaders reported that relationships with foundations in Colorado ebb and flow depending on foundation staffing. In other words, Native leaders do not feel that philanthropic

Project Mosaic interviewed executive directors from eight of the largest Colorado Native American community-based organizations. Each interview consisted of 20 questions regarding services the organizations currently provide and what additional services they could provide with more funding. Executive directors were also asked to describe their experiences with local foundations, including their interactions, relationships, barriers, and adequacy of funding. To be included in this exercise, the nonprofit represented had to be Colorado-based, Native American-led (board and/or executive leadership), and primarily serving the local Native American community. The selected organizations were located along the Colorado Front Range, from Fort Collins to Pueblo.

organizations are true partners and rather than they have individual advocates within foundations. Respondents described that when those program officers leave, a new long process of relationship building has to begin anew, putting nonprofit leaders in positions where future funding is uncertain.

Nonprofit Capacity

Native nonprofit leaders often cited lack of organization capacity as a reason for not receiving support from Colorado philanthropy, recognizing that this is an ongoing challenge. Native leaders noted that being able to build capacity effectively at organizations depends on having reliable and consistent funding to support capacity-building efforts.⁵ With so few resources directed to Colorado Native American community-based organizations, these organizations are trapped in what some have termed the “nonprofit starvation cycle” — the systemic underfunding of organizations because of unrealistic foundation expectations that leads to organizations underinvesting in their own capacity and infrastructure.⁶

Related to this, most nonprofit leaders noted that the bulk of funding they receive is restricted to



programmatic efforts of organizations. Significant general support grants that could be used for capacity development are extremely rare. Moreover, reliable general support opportunities are not provided by foundations. Given that building organizational capacity building by nonprofits is ongoing — a journey not a destination — Native organizations need more and consistent general operating support to build their own long-term capacity.

Process Barriers

Many nonprofit leaders felt that most foundation grant application processes are overly burdensome and biased toward larger organizations with greater capacity to respond to foundation questions and processes. Native nonprofit leaders conveyed that foundation processes also require a significant amount of time and attention, which takes away from the community-based work these organizations were created to do.

More explicitly, Native leaders also noted that most foundation processes are entrenched in norms and values that reinforce exclusionary standards of nonprofit practice, including in evaluation and data collection. Many Native leaders noted that foundations always want more data but do not understand the systemic and intentional lack of data on Native communities across the U.S.

They also do not understand that some of the data requirements of foundations are based on outlining deficits of communities rather than lifting up culturally relevant practices that are known to build positive identity, self-worth, and overall health of Native people.⁷

Understanding Native American History in Colorado

Nonprofit leaders also noted that most individuals who work in Colorado foundations do not understand Colorado history and the genocide that forced most Native people from the state, except for the two Native nations in Colorado today. Similarly, most people in philanthropy do not know how federal policy in the 1950s brought Native people to the Denver metro area in an effort to assimilate and exterminate Native nations and tribal identities. They have little understanding about how this has contributed to generational poverty and historical trauma. Moreover, they do not understand how this relates to the importance of Native organizations in the state that are looking to perpetuate Native cultural practices and identities as an imperative strategy for sustaining and keeping Native families together. This lack of understanding has a direct effect on the ability of individuals at Colorado foundations to understand the work, goals, and vision of Colorado Native American community-based organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS for Supporting Native-led Change Across Colorado

Build Better Relationships: Foundation leaders need to engage and build relationships with Colorado Native American community-based organization leaders, including with the two Native nations in the state. Foundations should understand that relationship building takes time, dedication, action, and intentionality.

Invest in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Foundations should ensure that Native people are included and named as priority populations in foundation diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments. When Native Americans are not named, they are likely to remain invisible and dismissed.

In line with this, foundations need to expand Native American representation in their own organizations.

To start, foundations can analyze staff and board composition and be intentional about adding Native American individuals to foundation boards and hiring Native people as staff. At the same time, foundations cannot make these individuals their institutional unicorns — expecting these individuals to shoulder the burden of Native American knowledge and the education of others. An institutional commitment is needed to ensure Native people are a key part of foundation diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

Make Native Communities and Leaders Visible in Foundation Work: Foundations in Colorado need to be intentional about making Native communities, leaders, and issues visible in the state. Small things include inviting Native organizations to nonprofit convenings. Larger commitments include making Native people visible in data collected by foundations, prioritizing Native issues, and uplifting awareness of these issues to the broader public.

Native Americans and the Nonprofit Sector

- First Nations Development Institute has created a [Philanthropy in Indian Country](#) page with a list of resources and articles that have appeared in *Nonprofit Quarterly* featuring Native American nonprofit leaders and their perspectives on topics important to the sector.
- Native Americans in Philanthropy has created a [Reports and Resources](#) page that has research reports on Native Americans and philanthropy.

Books

Stereotypes and Myths

- Dunbar-Ortiz, R., & Gilio-Whitaker, D. (2016). *"All the Real Indians Died Off": And 20 Other Myths about Native Americans*. Beacon Press.
- Smith, Paul Chaat. (2009). *Everything you know about Indians is wrong*. University of Minnesota Press.
- First Nations Development Institute. 2019. *Reclaiming Native Truth: A Project to Dispel Americans Myths and Misconceptions*.

History and Native American politics

- Deloria, Vine. (1988). *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Deloria, Vine, and Clifford M. Lytle. (1998). *The nations within: The past and future of American Indian sovereignty*. University of Texas Press.
- Conetah, Fred. (1982). *A history of the Northern Ute people*. Uintah-Ouray Ute Tribe.
- Coel, Margaret. (1988). *Chief Left Hand: Southern Arapaho (Civilization of the American Indian Series) (Volume 159)*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- Decker, Peter R.R. (2004). *The Utes Must Go!: American Expansion and the Removal of a People*. Chicago Review Press - Fulcrum.

Fund Colorado Native American

Community-based Organizations: Foundations need to be more intentional in their support of Colorado Native American community-based organizations. Individual foundations should examine and make public their levels of giving to Colorado Native American community-based organizations and develop action plans to make giving portfolios more representative of Colorado Native American community-based organizations. Similarly, foundations need to fund Colorado Native American community-based organization priorities.

Get Educated: Colorado has a rich history when it comes to Native people and communities. But most individuals in Colorado do not know this history. In addition, most individuals working in Colorado foundations do not know the vibrant and exciting work occurring in Native communities across the state. Thus, foundations need to educate themselves to better understand history and current realities and the impactful work being done by Colorado Native American community-based organizations.

Native Americans and the Federal Urban Relocation Program

- Fixico, Donald Lee. (2000). *The urban Indian experience in America*. UNM Press.
- Martinez, Donna, Grace Sage, and Azusa Ono. (2016). *Urban American Indians: Reclaiming Native Space: Reclaiming Native Space*. ABC-CLIO.

Documentaries

- *Colorado Experience: Sand Creek Massacre and The Original Coloradans*
- *How the West Was Lost* Miniseries, *The Utes Must Go* (Episode 10) and *The Unconquered* (Episode 11)



Methodology Notes

This report is focused on understanding funding to Native organizations that serve Native communities in the state of Colorado. To examine levels of giving to Colorado Native American community-based organizations, data was pulled from 60 IRS Form 990 filings from 2016 to 2018 for the top 20 Colorado-based foundations. Keyword searches for known Native organizations were applied to the Form 990s to identify grants awarded to them. Then, a secondary look at 990 forms was conducted for organizations that may have been missed via keyword searches.

Keyword searches included: Native American, American Indian, Ute, Indigenous, Tribe, Tribal, Bison, Spirit, and Herbal, in the event that these words were included in grant names or brief grant descriptions. The data was also cross-checked with the Giving to Native Communities database.⁸ The data exhibited a high degree of correlation, but some anomalies were identified. In the event of anomalies, data from the actual 990s was used.

The Native American nonprofit community is small, and there are only two Native nations in the state. Researchers were able to identify a total of 10 Native organizations in Colorado. Giving to national intermediaries located in Colorado, like First Nations Development Institute, American Indian College Fund, Native American Rights Fund, and others, were excluded from this analysis because most of their program services occur outside the state or across multiple states.

Limitations of Data

We acknowledge that there are data limitations in our approach. But overall, data on foundation giving is difficult to obtain as most foundations are not transparent about their giving outside IRS requirements on Form 990. Thus, it is possible that we omitted a grant by a foundation or grants below \$5,000 that are often not reported on Form 990.

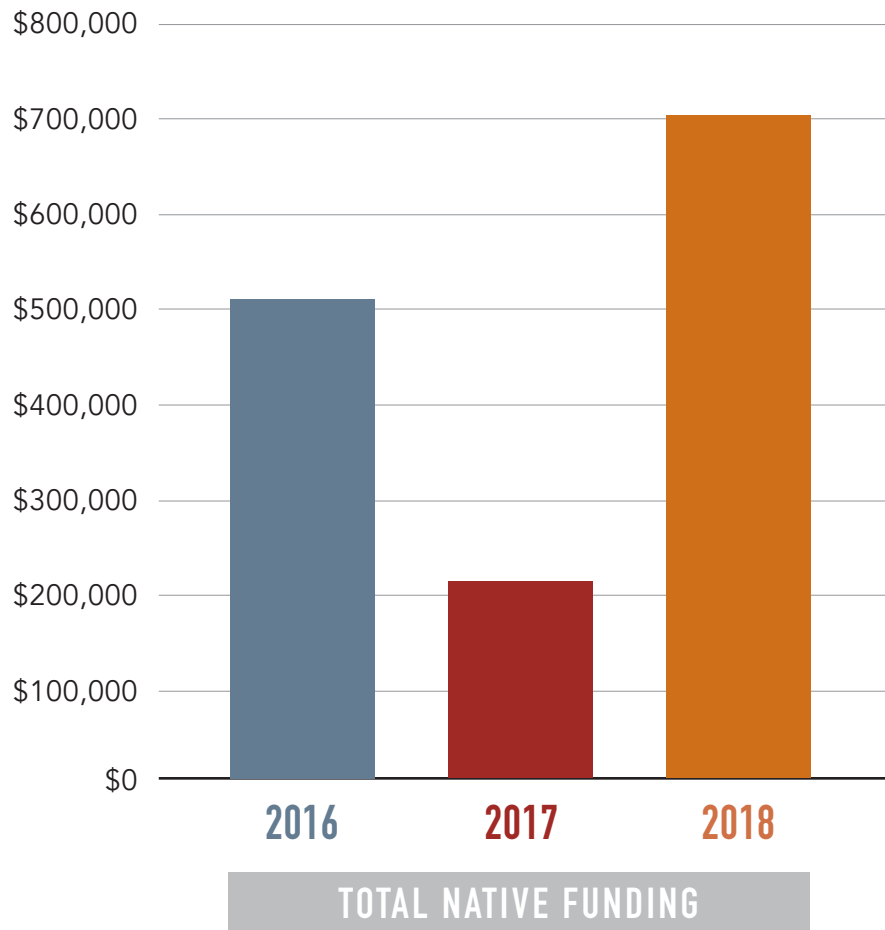
APPENDIX Table 1

Total Funding from 2016 to 2018 and Ranking of Top 20 Colorado-based Foundations

RANK	COLORADO FOUNDATION	2016 to 2018 GIVING	PERCENTAGE of TOTAL GIVING
1	The Colorado Health Foundation	\$258,384,411	19%
2	The Denver Foundation	\$195,095,883	14%
3	The Anschutz Foundation	\$174,001,057	13%
4	The Daniels Fund	\$180,860,042	13%
5	Gates Family Foundation	\$62,283,043	5%
6	Rose Community Foundation	\$58,534,805	4%
7	Bohemian Foundation	\$54,465,700	4%
8	El Pomar Foundation	\$53,436,470	4%
9	Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation	\$52,324,078	4%
10	The Gill Foundation	\$35,375,659	3%
11	Boettcher Foundation	\$34,234,076	3%
12	The Colorado Trust	\$29,032,821	2%
13	The Aspen Community Foundation	\$25,672,071	2%
14	Community Foundation of Northern Colorado	\$25,456,684	2%
15	Global Greengrants Fund	\$24,038,852	2%
16	Adolph Coors Foundation	\$23,380,361	2%
17	The Community Foundation Boulder County	\$22,137,401	2%
18	The Louis Calder Foundation	\$21,851,500	2%
19	Western Union Foundation	\$14,314,320	1%
20	Henry P. Crowell and Susan C. Crowell Trust	\$14,286,827	1%
TOTAL		\$1,359,166,061	

NOTE Original ranking based on data from <https://www.tgci.com/funding-sources/CO/top>. Ultimate ranking based on actual data from IRS Form 990s and the sum of total giving from 2016 to 2018.

Colorado Native American Community-based Organizations Funding Trend 2016 to 2018



- 1 For example, see the following: First Nations Development Institute, **Executive Summary: Growing Inequity: Large Foundation Giving to Native American Organizations and Causes, 2006-2014**, 2018, (accessed January 2022). Native Americans in Philanthropy and Candid, **Investing in Native Communities**, 2019, (accessed January 2022).
- 2 First Nations Development Institute, **Community Foundation Giving to Native American Causes**, 2018, (accessed January 2022).
- 3 Center for Effective Philanthropy, **Overlooked: Foundation Support for Native American Leaders and Communities**, (accessed January 2022); First Nations Development Institute, **We need to Change How we Think: Perspectives on Philanthropy's Underfunding of Native Communities and Causes**, (accessed January 2022). Moquino, Trisha, **Let's Talk About Fundraising: A Perspective from Cochiti Pueblo**, *Nonprofit Quarterly*, November 11, 2019.
- 4 Kan, Lyle Matthew, **The 2020 Diversity Among Philanthropic Professionals Report**, Change Philanthropy, (August 2021).
- 5 Echohawk, Sarah. **Unpacking Capacity Building**. *Nonprofit Quarterly*, October 28, 2019.
- 6 Gregory, Ann Goggins & Don Howard, **The Nonprofit Starvation Cycle**, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, (2009) Foundation Maps Candid.
- 7 For further discussion on Native American and data challenges in the nonprofit sector see the following: Valerie Segrest and Lisa Wilson, **Celebrating Our Strengths: Authentic Partnerships for Nation Building**, *Nonprofit Quarterly* (November 25, 2019). Sid Davis, **Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Breaking the Cycle of History**, Grant Station (April 8, 2021).
- 8 See the funding map compiled by Native Americans in Philanthropy and Candid here: <https://nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map/>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was authored by Raymond Foxworth, Ph.D., at First Nations Development Institute and Project Mosaic LLC, a Colorado-based Indigenous woman-owned consulting firm. 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 and Project Mosaic LLC. (2022). Colorado Foundations and their Support of Native American Community-based Nonprofits. Longmont, CO: First Nations Development Institute.

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For more information, contact:

First Nations Development Institute

303.774.7836

info@firstnations.org



firstnations.org

projectmosaicllc.com