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CENTER for NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

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The State of Native Youth Report 2022

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Truth Warning:
The 2022 State of Native Youth Report unpack the realities and experiences that Indigenous people have faced throughout history and continue to today. Some of these truths may be difficult to read, but recognize they are harder to live and experience. Indigenous people will always persevere because it is in our blood.

Center Us. Center for Native American Youth,
“Center Us” State of Native Youth Report
Washington, DC Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute December 2022.

Contents

THE CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

The Center for Native American Youth (CNAY) at the Aspen Institute is a national education and advocacy organization that works alongside Native youth—ages 24 and under—on reservations, rural, villages and urban spaces across the country to improve their health, safety, and overall well- being. All Native youth deserve to lead full and healthy lives, have equal access to opportunity, draw strength from Native culture, and inspire one another. At CNAY, this is achieved through empowerment and culturally competent methodologies including leadership, youth-led policy agenda, and youth-led narrative. By supporting youth-led and community driven initiatives, CNAY continues to build a network of Native youth leaders. Through hands-on trainings and technical assistance, Generation Indigenous, CNAY Youth Advisory Board, Champions for Change, and other platforms, CNAY continues to evaluate and develop our programming through Indigenous methodology.

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. In addition to the Washington, D.C. office, the Aspen Institute has campuses in Aspen, CO and in New York, NY. The Aspen Institute and its international partners promote the creation of a free, just, and equitable society in a nonpartisan and nonideological setting through seminars, policy programs, conferences, and leadership development initiatives.

ABOUT THE COVER

Name: **Chelysa Rose Maria Owens-Cyr**
Fort Peck Assinibione & Sioux,
Pasqua First Nations Plains Cree & Saulteaux
Pronouns: She/Her/They
Age: 23

THE CREATIVE NATIVE PROGRAM

This report features artwork submitted by Indigenous artists ages 5-24 years old across Indian Country. The Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) Creative Native Call for Art was created by former CNAY Newman's Own Foundation Fellow and renowned artist, Del Curfman (Apsáalooke). This initiative is designed to provide space and support to young Indigenous artists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Center for Native American Youth would like to acknowledge the dedicated team, Nikki Santos, Maria Samaniego, Cheyenne Brady, Cheyenne Kippenberger, William Wilkinson, and Cordelia Falls Down.

A special recognition to youth leaders Ryder Jiron, Isabella TwoCrow, Lily Painter, Chenoa Scippio, and Triston Black. Appreciation to Jennifer Peacock, Billie Kipp, and Zianne Richardson.

Appreciation to graphic designer Michael Woestehoff of Ellsworth consulting. Thank you to Congresswoman Sharice Davids. Gratitude to the Center for Native American Youth's Youth Advisory Board for their continued guidance, the 2022 Creative Natives, and the youth who continue to inspire our program.

This report is made possible with support by Annie E. Casey, Casey Family Programs, and Comcast. A special thank you to the 2022 Creative Natives whose art is showcased throughout the 2022 State of Native Youth Report.

Foreword

Triston Black
(Navajo Nation)

Yá'át'ééh to all my relatives across Indian Country.

From my heart to yours, this year's State of Native Youth Report is about recognizing and honoring the importance of you. You, as an individual – empower our people, you, as an individual – elevate our voices, and you, as an individual – carry our ancestral prayer forward. Like many of our stories, we all share the importance of family, community, and people. Yet sometimes, we forget to include self. We sometimes forget to include ourselves because we were taught to think of others first, yet we overlook and carry on. Still, our Indigenous Knowledge Systems acknowledge self in relation to one's mental and social well-being. That is why, more than ever, we must come together to be a good relative from one nation to the next.

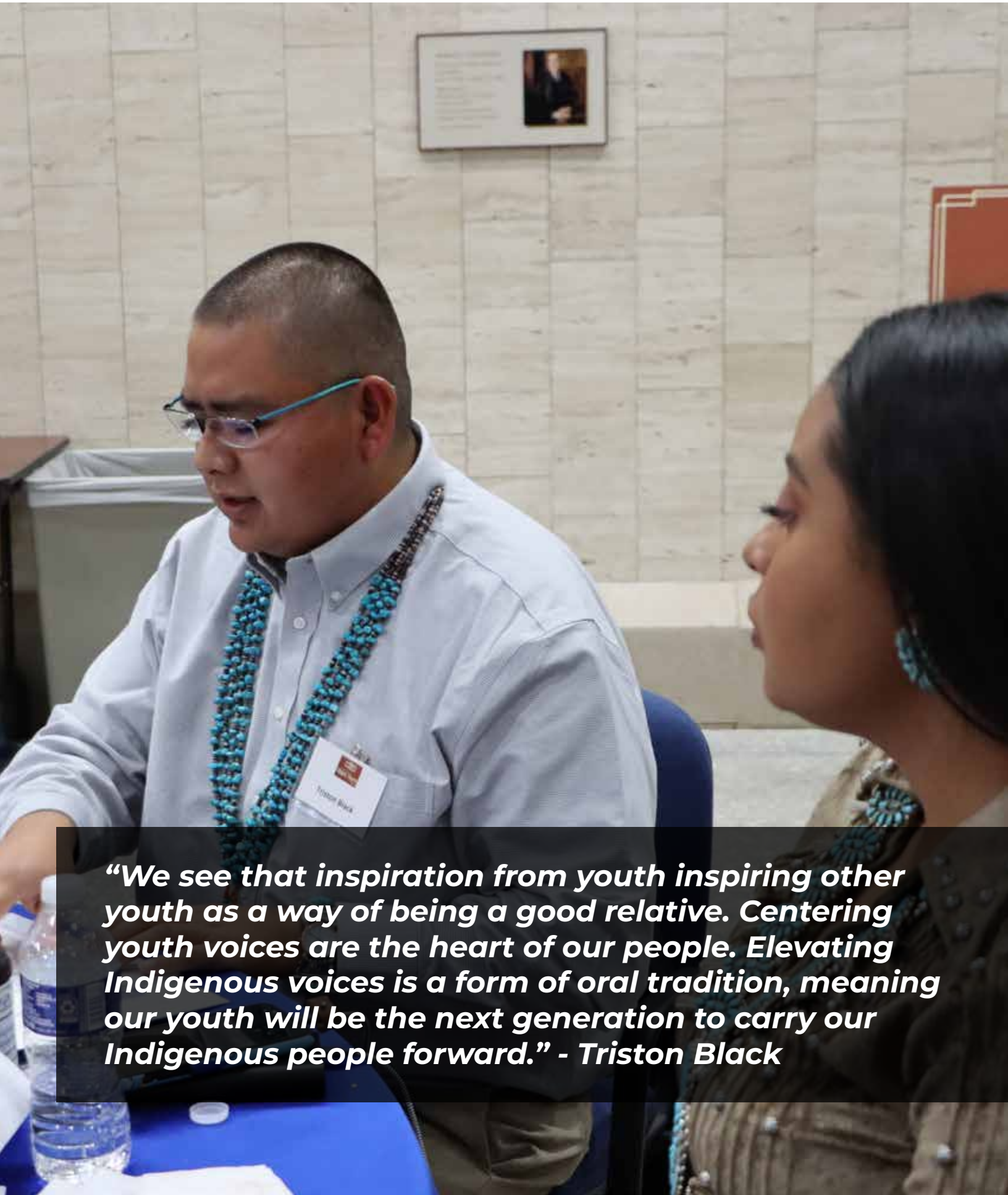
You might ask yourself, how do I become a good relative? Where do I go for support? How can I get involved? These are essential questions that challenge us to be a good relative.

I pondered on these questions, and an elder approached one day, and they said, "nihizaad dóó nihe'ó'ool'iił dzidísingo náás dzinooséél dooleeł." It translates to: "our language and our culture value you as an individual." I carry this teaching with me, and it speaks to the lived and shared experiences of our ancestral knowledge and history and communicates the importance of identity and how we all honor our ancestors.

We all have someone we value in our lives. It could be our family, friends, or mentors. We even value our livestock, pets, traditional attire, and precious memories. It is these living beings or memories that make us a good relative. We all have daily struggles or are overcoming difficulties, and it's ok to talk with someone, take a walk, ride a horse, or pray in your way. There are many ways you can cope with your struggles, but there is only one you. Your mental health is carrying our ancestral path forward.

Being a good relative is the kind of ancestor you are becoming.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.



"We see that inspiration from youth inspiring other youth as a way of being a good relative. Centering youth voices are the heart of our people. Elevating Indigenous voices is a form of oral tradition, meaning our youth will be the next generation to carry our Indigenous people forward." - Triston Black

Across Indian Country, we see Native youth achieving their dreams, whether on the basketball court, in the classroom, or on the rodeo grounds. Their passion drives them, and other Native youth are watching them.

We see that inspiration from youth inspiring other youth as a way of being a good relative. Centering youth voices are the heart of our people. Elevating Indigenous voices is a form of oral tradition, meaning our youth will be the next generation to carry our Indigenous people forward. When we go home, we feel the warmth of our family and the happiness of the plants, trees, and natural environment welcoming us home.

That is our sense of belonging. Having a sense of belonging nurtures our mental health and well-being.

Finding safe spaces is paramount when we talk about improving our well-being. The Center for Native American Youth is a safe space for Indigenous youth to create dialogue and network with other Indigenous youth. Being present in these spaces collectively strengthens our well-being. Look around your community. Where can you make a safe space for your peers, friends, or even your mind? Some tools may be in your community, and bringing youth together will help you find other resources.

Since the onset of the pandemic, our mental health and well-being have taken a toll on our people. Yet, we remain grounded and stand together as Indigenous people by helping one another, seeking traditional healing, and remembering loved ones. Last year, the New Mexico Indigenous Youth Council and its partners lit the fire to create an Indigenous Youth Wellness Summit. From our conversations with Native youth, the Youth Council generated the 2021 Indigenous Youth Wellness Report & Recommendations that focuses on physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual/cultural well-being. This year, the Youth Council focused on the same aspects of being a good relative. It was the support of the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department and Governor Michelle

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Lujan-Grisham that the NM Indigenous Youth Council could carry out this work for Native youth. As a call to action, I encourage Native youth to plan a youth wellness training, presentation, or workshop in your community.

I am glad I was able to share space with you. We sing our songs to shield us from harm, pray with our language to protect us, and ask for good health and a healthy mind. One thing I always remind myself when using my voice is to be humble. I wouldn't have gotten to where I am without the support of family, friends, and our way of life teachings. These teachings, stories, and organizations come with a team, and not one of us alone could do it all; it takes a team for change.

I find strength in our 2022 Champions for Change team. Working with people like Ivy Pete (Pyramid Lake Paiute & Blackfeet), an Indigenous student activist working to empower youth through policy work and civil service; Maria Walker (White Mountain Apache), who is tackling the health disparities in tribal communities; Kaliko Kalāhiki (Kanaka Maoli), a Native Hawaiian activist seeking to recenter environmentalism on Indigenous movements.

My friends are the next generation of leaders in Indian Country and humbly are good relatives. Find your team and create positive change to improve the mental health of our Indigenous youth.

Lastly, I want to give appreciation to all our mental health clinicians, school counselors, wellness instructors, and health professionals that serve our tribal communities. These are our relatives.

Axéhee' (thank you)

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

The State of Native Youth today is inspiring. They create spaces for advocacy, expression, and conversation and are on journeys our ancestors would be proud of.

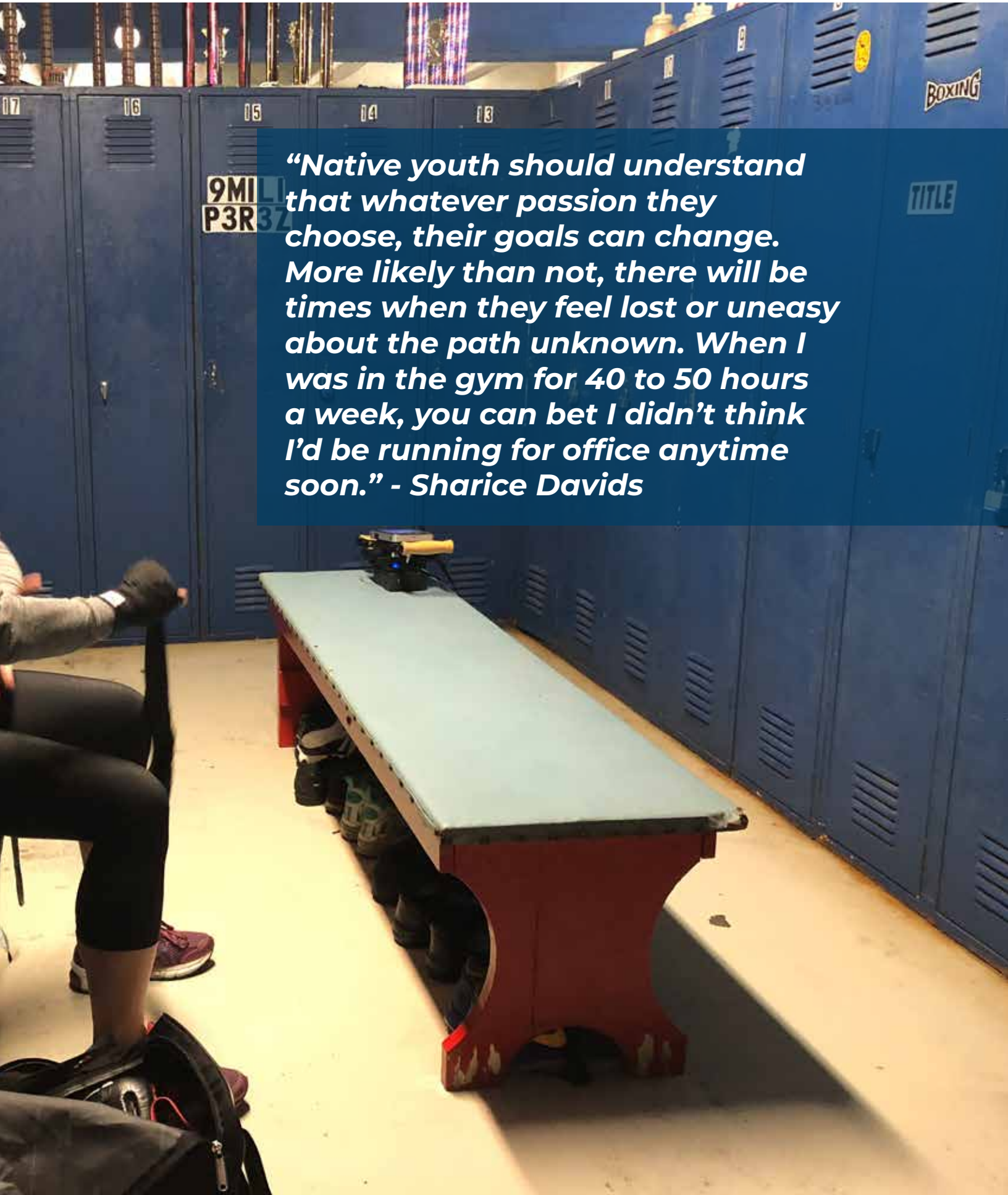
For far too long, our experiences were either heard from unfamiliar lenses or simply not heard at all. Instead of relying on others to tell our stories or offer solutions, Native youth are standing up for their communities and raising their voice for all to listen. They are unapologetic and not afraid to create their own path to achieve their goals.

Finding one's voice is sometimes difficult, but let me assure you, we all have one. I feel like I have

SHARICE DAVIDS

(Ho-Chunk Nation) U.S. Representative for the State of Kansas

Photo courtesy of Sharice Davids.



"Native youth should understand that whatever passion they choose, their goals can change. More likely than not, there will be times when they feel lost or uneasy about the path unknown. When I was in the gym for 40 to 50 hours a week, you can bet I didn't think I'd be running for office anytime soon." - Sharice Davids

never been shy about using my voice, but to explain how I found mine, I need to share a little more about my youth and where I came from.

I'm proud to be a member of Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin and am the proud daughter of an Army veteran. My mom served in the Army for 20 years - part of that time as a drill sergeant. After the Army, she continued public service at the U.S. Postal Service until her retirement.

Photo courtesy of Sharice Davids.

Growing up being raised by a single mother, I learned so much about service, sacrifice, and dedication to country. My brothers and I were fortunate to grow up with such an incredible role model like my mom. She is my biggest supporter and one of the hardest working people I know. While she was strong at work, I was able to be strong and fierce at home. Her love and guidance allowed me to speak up and take on any opportunity, whether it was pursuing my education in community college and law school, through my career as a professional MMA fighter, or as a White House Fellow.

Each of these endeavors taught me discipline and to reach for whatever goal I wanted to accomplish. It took me years of mixed martial arts training to earn a chance to fight. Then I had to train and fight my way through law school. Although it was a different battle, I still needed to utilize the same drive and dedication. I learned with enough hard work, you will improve, even if you don't see the results right away.

Along my journey, I realized a lot of the people I worked with didn't look like me or share the same lived experiences. Speaking up for my community may have been bold, but I saw it as necessary.

I decided to run for office because I thought a voice like mine needed to be heard in Congress. Now more than ever, I see the importance of having leaders at all levels of government that recognize and address issues in Native communities. We are fighting every day to make a difference in the lives of the people we were elected to represent. That includes Tribal Nations – populations historically overlooked by our federal government.

I feel so fortunate that I got to be one of the first two Native American women ever elected in Congress along with my friend, and now Secretary

Photo courtesy of Sharice Davids.

of the Interior Deb Haaland. Now, I would be remiss if I did not mention the historic moment we celebrated with the swearing in of the first Alaska Native Representative Mary Peltola! She joins a bipartisan and growing cohort of Native representation in Congress. We may be making history as "the firsts," but learning from the leadership of our Native youth today, I can confidently say we will not be the last. I look forward to welcoming more Native representation at all levels of tribal, federal, state, and local governments.

Native youth should understand that whatever passion they choose, their goals can change. More likely than not, there will be times when they feel lost or uneasy about the path unknown. When I was in the gym for 40 to 50 hours a week, you can bet I didn't think I'd be running for office anytime soon.

But what I learned there was invaluable:

- *Roll with the punches–well, mostly try not to get punched–*
- *Put in the work ahead of time, and*
- *Get back up when you do get knocked down.*

These lessons are useful in my current line of work more often than you might think. I didn't know it at the time, but I was learning skills that would help me find consensus and work through policy problems as a legislator. So whenever doubt takes over, stop for a moment and think about what you have learned throughout your journey to accomplish your goals.

Then build towards that. Our Native youth shouldn't worry about what other people are doing or be afraid to make a change. Being outspoken about one's passions should never be an obstacle. It may inspire another. I use those lessons as guidance every day. We as members of Congress owe a trust and treaty obligation to Tribal nations. To strengthen our government-to-government relationship, we must put in the work. But just as much as we encourage Native youth to use their voice, don't forget to listen too.

Here is what I learned while reading this report: Native youth are not our next leaders. They are already leading the way, transforming systems, and being the voice for our relatives. They are addressing the silent crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples by holding our federal partners accountable in the implementation of Savannah's Act and Not Invisible Act. They are also facing the difficult conversation of boarding schools and the intergenerational impacts that came from our federal government's assimilation practices.

Their advocacy is why I reintroduced the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act with Congressional Native American Caucus Co-Chair Tom Cole. The federal government owes Native children and lost relatives the time and resources to investigate and fully understand how we got here. Establishing a Truth and Healing Commission will bring survivors, experts, federal partners, and tribal leaders to the table to continue this investigation and develop a culturally respectful healing process.

Native youth are also moving forward policy that strengthens sovereignty and self-determination over our lands, foods, and cultures. Advocating for Tribes and tribal communities ensures our lands are protected for future generations. Native youth are defending sacred sites and are the reason the bipartisan Save Oak Flat Act was written.

These are sometimes difficult conversations, and Native youth are leading the way and keeping our relatives in the forefront. Their strength, courage,

and compassion are the product of our ancestors. The conversations they share today shows that we are resilient, we are diverse, and we are still here now and for the next seven generations and beyond.

In addition to leading with courage, I also see the beauty and creativity Native youth bring to the table. They are revitalizing languages and expressing themselves in ways that anyone can see, hear, and laugh along with. I enjoyed watching their talent and creativity on TV and social media both in front of and behind the camera. Our humor is contagious, and our "young elders" are sharing it with the world. Native youth using their talents to showcase Indian Country is beautiful, whether it is through fashion, sports, music, or in the trades. Native youth are thriving on the paths our ancestors created and blazing new routes for our next leaders.

This foreword is a token of gratitude to our Native youth, and this report shows they are shaping the country's narrative by not only being at the table, but also demanding their diverse voices are heard. I am inspired by their courage and large voice. They are our leaders and we as federal partners have much to learn. I am comforted in knowing we will not need to wait decades for Native youth to lead. They are here now and will not slow down.

I look forward to working alongside Native youth and advancing priorities that will be felt in future generations. Be well and continue making Indian country proud.

Representative Sharice Davids

Sharice Davids on Facebook (2020): My mom is my hero. She's an Army veteran and former drill sergeant. She raised me and my brothers as a single mom.

"You need to find your center." I can hear my mom's loving tone as she lectures me whenever I get stressed and overwhelmed, which, to be honest, is often. To be centered or to find your center is to be grounded in your being, your reason, and your truth. I find grounding when I think of my five-year-old daughter, my family, my culture, and prayer. *What is your center?*

This year's State of Native Youth Report is called Center Us. We chose this title because we want to encourage everyone to center, ground, to find reasoning and truth in Native American youth. When we think of investment, inclusion, equity, and justice, we must create intentional space for them. This is done in our work at CNAY through culturally immersive programming that is designed with and for Native youth. We are

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nikki Santos
(Coeur d'Alene Tribe)
Executive Director
Center for Native American Youth

Photos courtesy of CNAY.

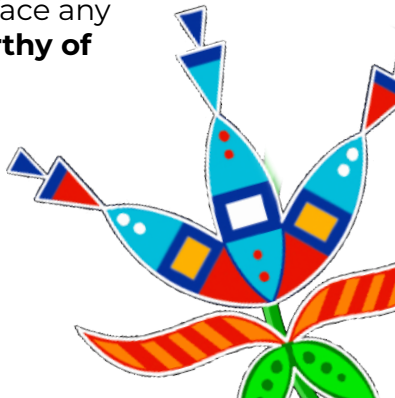
intentional in our impact and prioritize the needs of our youth leaders. Our work is holistic, centering the mind, body, and spirit of the youth leaders we serve and their desire to better our world. Whether gifting Native youth traditional plants and medicines after a group activity, praying together before a leadership program, or going to district basketball tournaments with the community—our support and investment for the young people we serve go beyond any structured program or intervention.

With truth comes transformation. In order to center Native youth, there are realities that must be examined. In the 2022 State of Native Youth Report's Center Us, we write what we know to be true:

- Native people are experiencing climate change at disproportionate rates, continually worsened by policies and historically systemic racism. Native youth are often at the front lines demanding justice for the land, water, and all its relatives, only to be met with silence and tried erasure.
- Systems designed to eradicate, separate, and assimilate Native children and their families must be confronted. These tactics have been used through federal Indian boarding schools in the late 1800s and continue today through the attack of the Indian Child Welfare Act. These systems are a direct attack on our culture and livelihood. As a result, we must work together in recognizing and addressing these barriers in order for our communities to thrive.
- Like many young people, Native youth use technology and media as a means of direct action, community organizing, and coalition building. Additionally, Native people are using innovative ways for media platforms to serve as cultural and language preservation and revitalization.
- Art can inspire and transform us, and Native youth are using art to address mental health, engage civically in their communities, and transform how the world perceives them.

When you include Native youth truth, we create a new system that is inclusive of culture, Indigenous knowledge systems, and frameworks and supports their ability to transform our society. To center Native American youth is to uplift, honor, and love them. When we center Native youth, we are helping them thrive and providing them the ability to create positive change that impacts all of us.

To our young readers, I encourage you to find what works for you in centering yourself and lean on it when times get tough. Use your center for strength, and take up the space you need. In doing so, you can face any obstacles with clear eyes, determination, and purpose. **You are worthy of being centered.**



Photos courtesy of CNAY.

"To center Native American youth is to uplift, honor, and love them. When we center Native youth, we are helping them thrive and providing them the ability to create positive change that impacts all of us."

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

"Through an Indigenous framework, we can supply Native youth with the tools to change their communities in the future."

Society at large teaches Native people that they must push their cultural identity aside to be successful. Yet, historical examples have shown that losing cultural identity is detrimental to one's well-being and existence. Indigenous people need a new approach to support their pride in their identity and what they can contribute to society.

Indigenized leadership is imperative to achieving the transfer of knowledge that can both decolonize education and support cultural sovereignty. CNAY has established community-based leadership programs that emphasize and provide the skills and experiences of place-based practice by targeting the educational and social development of young Native leaders. Sharing a commitment to serve their community. Claiming their voice for themselves and their community. Demonstrated and modeled in a way where education is the key to cultural survival and self-determination. Traveling across boundaries to understand and bridge relationships with others different from themselves. Continuously nurturing their inner spirit and sustaining their soul through balance in their lives.

Indigenous Frameworks

Healthy & Culturally Responsive Transfer of Knowledge

Billie Jo Kipp and
Ryder Jiron

Indigenous leadership is based on the value of service that benefits others. Leadership is not focused on the individual or exerting influence and power over others; instead, it focuses on the collective, where service is what is valued, and the needs of the group guide the actions of leaders.

The Indigenous Framework

CNAY is engaged in an Indigenous framework for providing skills, knowledge, and attributes that will sustain Native American youth leaders in their communities and support their movement and development as leaders. We are devoted to an Indigenous model of evaluation to ensure that culturally responsive curriculum respects, recognizes, and values the inherent worth of Indigenous cultures; is responsive to the communities needs as voiced by our Native Youth Leaders and members of their tribal communities; builds evaluation designs and processes around Indigenous assets and resources; is focused on healing and preserving Indigenous societies.

"Cognitive imperialism is about white-washing the mind as a result of forced assimilation, English education, Eurocentric humanities and sciences, and living in a Eurocentric context complete with media, books, laws, and values."

- Battiste, Marie. (2013). Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Within the context of decolonizing education in the United States, we remind our youth and allies that decolonization is a process that belongs to everyone. As such, it has vast possibilities for re-imagining our relationships.

The concept of decolonization is essential to the framework of Indigenous leadership. As Native youth are nurtured and mentored within their communities, they must clearly understand decolonization and the opportunities that can arise from decolonized ways of thinking and being. These youth leaders must have the opportunity to learn in a system that is decolonized which allows learning within an Indigenous context—without the overarching colonial mindset that has been pervasive in many leadership training sessions.

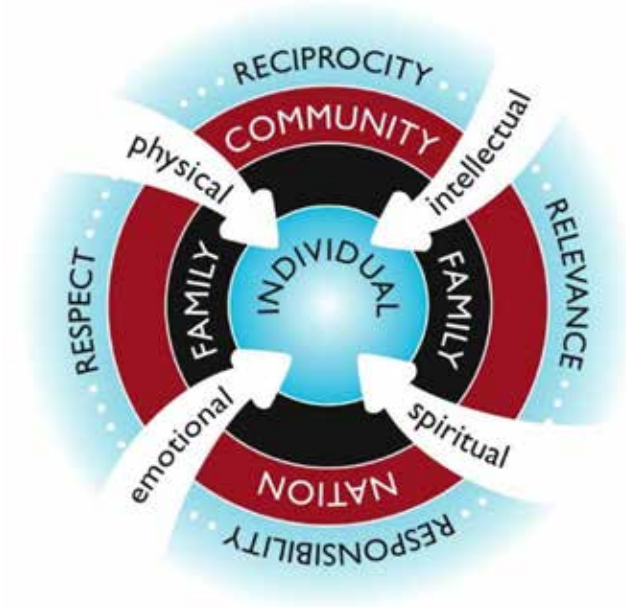


Figure illustrates the synergetic transfer of Indigenous knowledge. Pidgeon, Michelle. (2014). Moving Beyond Good Intentions: Indigenizing higher education in British Columbia universities through institutional responsibility and accountability. Journal of American Indian Education, 53(2), 7-28.

Our gifts unfold in a learning environment that sustains and challenges us as learners. Pueblo educator Gregory Cajete believes such a setting enables us, learners, to "find their heart, face, and foundation". The face is our identity, our heart is the passion that engages our life purpose, and the foundation is the talents and skills needed to put the passion to work. But that source is ultimately connected to a spiritual source, and these are vital foundations of aboriginal learning.[1]

In a decolonized learning environment, Native youth can thrive in ways they may not otherwise. By approaching their education from an Indigenous lens, they can think about concepts differently and relate to them in ways unique to themselves and their cultures. This is not to say that they were incapable of doing so otherwise, but to emphasize the importance of an approach styled after them. Through an Indigenous framework, we can supply Native youth with the tools to change their communities in the future. The following model encompasses Indigenous ways of knowing applied to curriculum development for native youth to decolonize the educational systems and evaluation.

Looking to the future and setting a stage for Indigenous leadership opportunities is at the forefront of this training. The result is to support Indigenous student success within the contextual infrastructure of decolonization. It is critical to consider the concept of decolonization when examining Indigenous leadership, by doing so, we dismantle cognitive imperialism.

CNAY understands the implications of cognitive imperialism and dismantles it through Indigenous framework, addressing the complexities and challenges that Native youth experience, and incorporating the impact of historical trauma, the resiliency of tribes, and the development of culturally supported tools.

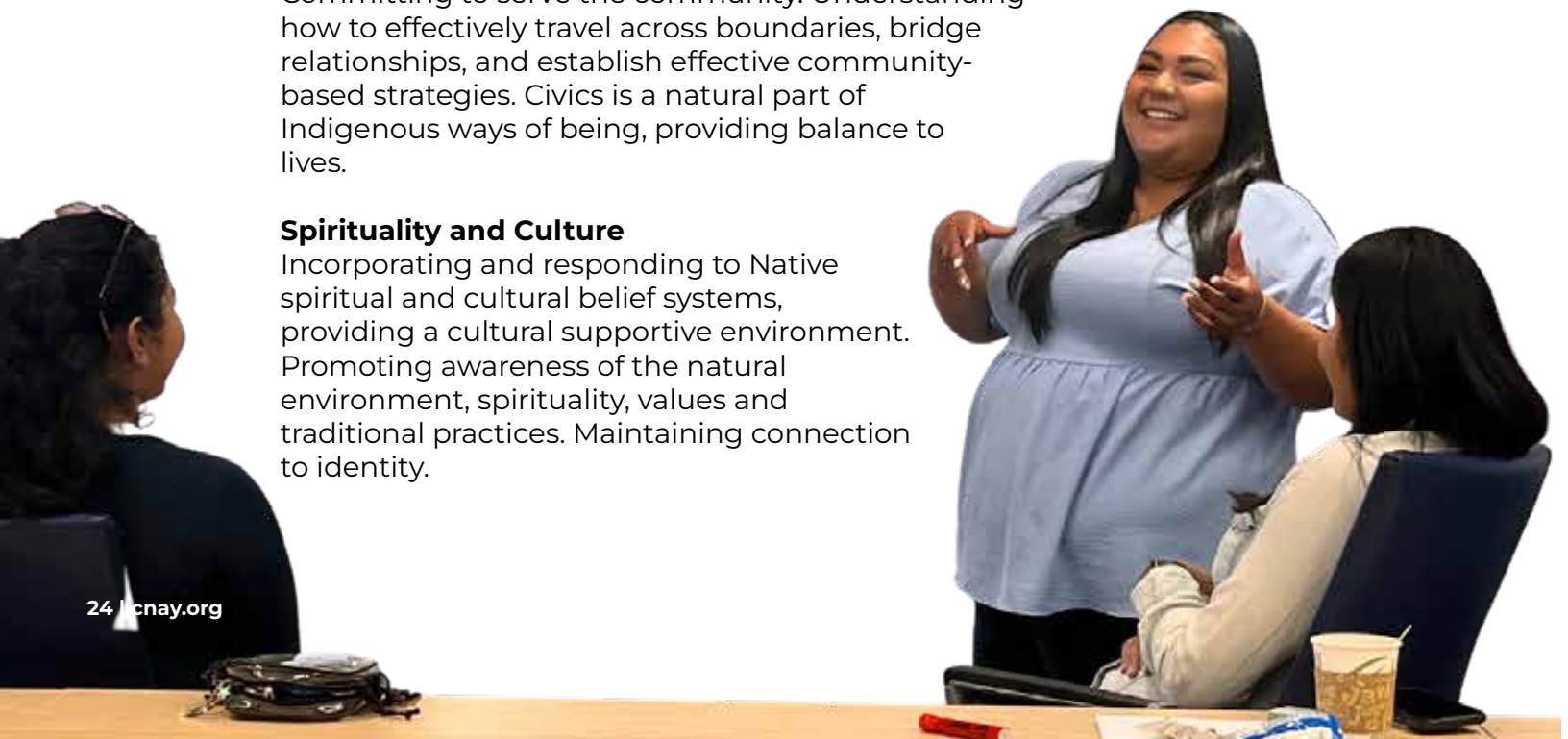
Similar to the four directions and the four stages of life upheld in many Indigenous belief systems, four pillars support the Indigenous Leadership Framework. These pillars have been found throughout Indigenous research to enhance and empower Indigenous leadership effectively.

Historical Knowledge
Focuses on understanding the impacts of historical events and systems, the influence of culture, and how Indigenous Peoples survive today. Acknowledging historical leadership and cultural practices and sets a foundation for how we will progress forward- and continue to rise in leadership.

Indigenous Leadership Characteristics
Uplifting and identifying Indigenous leadership while self-reflecting. Understanding Indigenous leadership puts the people first. It focuses on the collective, guided by the needs of the group.

Capacity Building
Committing to serve the community. Understanding how to effectively travel across boundaries, bridge relationships, and establish effective community-based strategies. Civics is a natural part of Indigenous ways of being, providing balance to lives.

Spirituality and Culture
Incorporating and responding to Native spiritual and cultural belief systems, providing a cultural supportive environment. Promoting awareness of the natural environment, spirituality, values and traditional practices. Maintaining connection to identity.



Indigenous Evaluation
CNAY believes in a culturally immersive evaluation with principles and practices of Tribally Driven Participatory Research (TDPR), for a responsive way to conduct research or evaluation. Not only is it community-based, but the unique aspects of tribal governance by sovereign Indigenous Nations address the jurisdictional, treaty, and constitutional rights of tribes to govern themselves and any research or evaluation that pertains to them.

CNAY incorporates culturally-specific Native methodologies and research protocols in all evaluations. The many qualitative methods suit TDPR, including talking circles, story-telling, and semi-structured interviews. These methods are instrumental during the formative research process, when it may not be clear how the community conceptualizes issues. In addition, qualitative methods elicit Native youth ideas about outcomes not adequately assessed by quantitative measures.

The TDPR approach also emphasizes culturally grounded intervention strategies. This stands in contrast to the practice of adapting evidence-based techniques to obtain cultural competence. Adaptation commonly involves using community members to provide feedback about the cultural acceptability of an intervention. In some instances, the existing intervention content is supplemented with materials (e.g., videotapes depicting members of that particular cultural group and/or changes in language). More substantive adaptation can involve altering components of an intervention that may be deemed offensive or incomprehensible by members of a particular group. For minority groups that have experienced

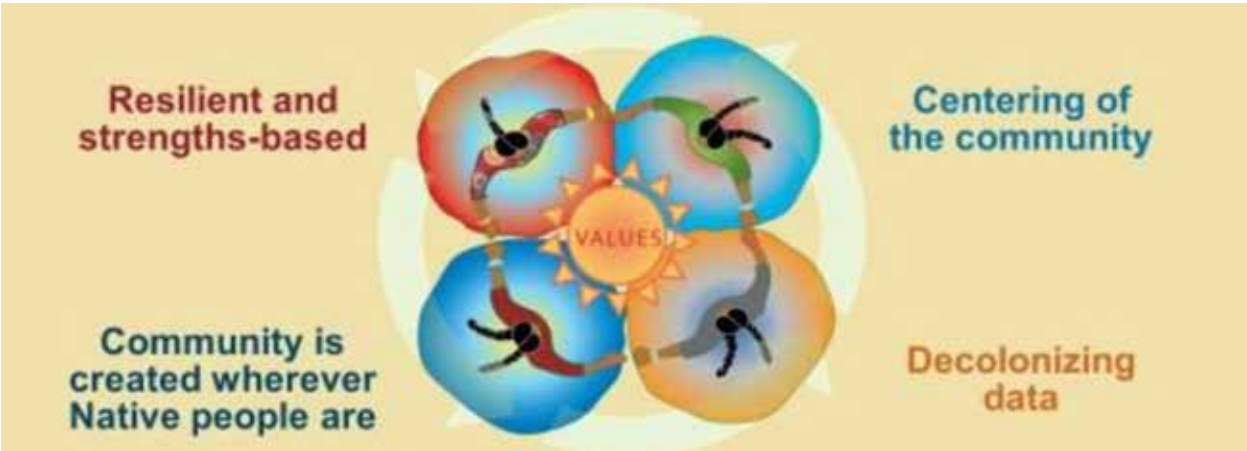


Figure above illustrates the four areas that surround values. In 2018, UIHI developed an Indigenous Evaluation Framework applicable to both tribal and urban Indian communities.

oppression, an adapted intervention developed by the majority culture may have several unintended negative implications. For example, perpetuate the belief that the community lacks the capability to define

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

and resolve its problems; thus, the community must adopt foreign concepts and values to address these issues that lack cultural competencies. Additionally, it may suggest that social problems result primarily from individuals' deficits rather than (at least in part) from historical and contextual factors such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, and living conditions.

Native youth voice and perceptions are interwoven in all evaluation phases, in our approach at CNAY. We develop research, tools, and platforms that support Native youth as advocates. Our policy and resource roundtable series brings our Native youth leaders together with a diverse range of policymakers, researchers, tribal leaders, and government and corporate leaders to identify timely advocacy opportunities and strategies for more significant impact.

In addition to ongoing policy and research tools, we also developed this State of Native Youth Report, which outlines what we learn from our youth network about their priorities, the programs that are making a difference, and the latest data available about their outcomes. Finally, we partner with a wide range of decision-makers, organizations, and policymakers to build seats at the table for Native youth to speak in their voice about the challenges and promising solutions in their communities.

All programs at CNAY are evaluated using an Indigenous evaluation model.[2] The critical elements of assessment are:

- **Community is created wherever Native people are: evaluation starts in the creation of these communities.**
- **Resilient and strength-based: uses the tools of evaluation to identify solutions by and for the community.**
- **Decolonizing data: rigorous data must be collected and used with the intent to benefit urban Indian communities.**
- **Centering of the community: community involvement in evaluation is crucial to the process of reclaiming data, understanding how the work is valuable, and including community perspectives.**

CNAY is dedicated to supporting the Native youth leader. We believe native leadership is a community process of orientation, support, accountability, trust, and even forgiveness that can grow the legacies of current leaders into new domains.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Since the onset of colonization, policies have impacted Native Peoples sovereignty, access to financial resources, health, land, education, cultural connection and more. Historically, policies were enacted to eradicate Native peoples, Native culture, and the spirit of our ancestors. It is these policies that have had a widespread effect that we still navigate today, commonly known to us as intergenerational traumas.

Despite these policies rooted in eradication, erasure and assimilation, intergenerational resiliency is within Native Peoples today. Intergenerational resiliency flows through our veins and pumps through the hearts of our people, connecting the living generation, ancestors, and those yet to come. Connection to culture and community, traditional ways of knowing, and desire to live and love our homelands have been guiding forces in the resiliency of our people.

Transforming Systems & Redefining Hope

Cheyenne Brady and Cordelia Falls Down

Federal Indian Board Schools

Over the span of 150 years, the United States of America operated or supported more than 400 Federal Indian boarding schools within its boundaries all aimed at altering the identities of young Indigenous children.[3] These schools' primary purpose was to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man", to assimilate Native people through stripping children of Indigenous culture and reform to how the Federal government wanted Native peoples to be. In 1819, Congress passed the Indian Civilization Fund Act, a process which was rooted in stripping Native People of their cultural identities. In addition to Federal Indian boarding schools, there were Indian day schools, sanitariums, asylums, orphanages and other institutions that were likely aimed at educating Indigenous children.[4]

Attendance at boarding schools has been found to have negatively impacted many historical and present day social determinants of health for the Indigenous population, including the prevalence of chronic disease.[5] Widespread impacts are due to the living conditions and treatment of the children. Meals often consisted of government-issued commodity foods that were high in fat and carbohydrates and extremely low in nutrients.[6] Schools were overcrowded, at times three children were sharing a twin size bed, and there were little to no individual hygiene products, resulting in high rates of illness.[7]

Upon their arrival, children were renamed, forced to take on English names, their long hair was cut, and their tribal (traditional) clothing taken away. They were banned from speaking their traditional languages and were not to utilize or reference traditional practices or beliefs. There was forced labor and corporal punishment. Children as young as four years old, possibly younger, were subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Many children longed for home and could no longer bear the horrendous conditions or forced lifestyle. There were high instances of runaway attempts, often ending in death or extreme punishment. To punish children who attempt to return to their families and their homes, "Whipping administered soundly and prayerfully, helps greatly..." when speaking of the runaways.[8] Much of the personnel and forced ideology came from religious institutions as they often provided support to the schools in various forms.[9] Many of the children taken to these schools never returned to their families.

Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Pennsylvania, c. 1900

Today, the federal government operates four boarding schools, and roughly 90 school buildings still exist.[10] Survivors, family members and those impacted by Indian boarding schools have reclaimed and redefined what an education system can look like. Indian boarding schools are now being led by our own Indigenous Peoples and curriculums are infused with our traditional ways of knowing. A demand for justice, truth, and healing is led through legislation, federal agencies and nonprofit organizations such as the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. We are searching for our children, providing healing to our families. At the time of publication, the remains of more than 500 Indigenous children who attended boarding schools have been found.[11] As investigations continue, there will be more remains of children uncovered.

Prior to boarding schools and institutions of education, Native youth received lessons in forms of understanding the cosmos, culture, language, and more. Education is rooted in culture through tribal colleges and universities, language immersion schools, and tribally chartered programs for youth. Scholarship programs in the American Indian College Fund, Native Forward Scholars Program and more provide support for youth to pursue higher education. Our people understand the importance in western education as a tool to advance and protect Native People and Native youth.

Child Welfare

A threat of child welfare was under attack in the 1970s and 80s through the United States child welfare system. Native children were removed from their homes at disproportionately high rates. Despite the American Indian Movement which fought against systemic racism and disparities, and civil

rights, welfare agencies held discriminatory views of Native people, which prompted agencies to, "literally steal children."[12] The Association on American Indian Affairs found that in these years between 25-35% of all American Indian (AI) children had been removed from their families, and 90% of them had been placed in non-Indigenous homes.[13] To be taken away from their culture, and forced to live with non-Native families was yet another attempt to assimilate Native children. Many of the children that were raised in non-Indigenous families have shared the adverse effects of being separated from their cultures and communities.[14]

With strong advocacy from Indigenous Peoples, the Federal government could no longer ignore that Indigenous children were over-represented within the child welfare system. In 1978, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed, establishing Federal standards for the removal and placement of Indigenous children and the termination of parental rights to protect the children and keep them connected to their respective families and tribes.[15] It is a framework of provisions that states must abide by when a dependency matter involves an Indigenous child.[16] Since the passing of ICWA, Indigenous Peoples and allies have worked to ensure its appropriate implementation, protecting the Indigenous children living outside of reservations.

Autumn Adams entered the child welfare system at 9 years old. She understands the system at a level most could not fathom. She has grown to be a strong advocate for foster reform. She currently raises her 2 younger siblings and is working on her (law degree). Autumn is resilience.

On reservations, tribes have exclusive jurisdiction over Indigenous children living within the boundaries of the reservation and over those who are wards of the respective tribal court.[17] Tribes operate social services programs with trained professionals overseeing child welfare cases. Tribal programs also work alongside the state and federal agencies to ensure proper care for children, often having ICWA workers who monitor tribal cases across the country. Lastly, many tribes will provide care for all federally recognized children living within their boundaries, although this is an individual tribal decision, as some may only wish to provide for their enrolled members. In this instance, cases are turned over to the state and ICWA applies.

ICWA was the first major step in transforming the way the child welfare system affects Indigenous children and supported by nonprofit and government organizations. For example, the ICWA Law Center, a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to strengthen, preserve and reunite

Indian families, consistent with the mandates and spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act.[18] Tribes are exercising their sovereignty and establishing more resources for children and families. Families are beginning to heal from historical traumas and are supporting relatives and children, ensuring family connections in various regards.

In February of 2020, the United States Supreme Court agreed to hear the argument that challenges the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The protection of Indigenous children could once again be endangered.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

"No More Stolen Sisters" Awareness artwork.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit +
This section contains strong language about violence against Indigenous women.

In most Indigenous communities, the women are the backbone of the families. They are life givers, able to physically bring a spirit from one world to another. Without women, tribes, communities, knowledge and future generations do not persist. Women are the first to develop a connection with our children while carrying them in the womb. Our children, new to this world, are seen as sacred beings. They are to be loved and protected, similar to their mothers, aunties, grandmothers and two-spirit relatives. As one day, the girls will be the givers of life, bringing in the next generation.- Cheyenne Brady

Since the onset of colonization, an epidemic rooted in violence, sexual assault, missing persons and murder has grown among Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit+ relatives. More than 80% of Indigenous women in the United States have experienced violence in their lifetime. This violence is most commonly committed by non-Indigenous perpetrators.[19] More than 56% of Indigenous women have experienced sexual assualt and victimization, resulting in rates that are 3 times higher than non-Indigenous women.[20] Data for reported missing women is inaccurate. In 2016, the National Crime Information Center reported that there were 5,712 cases of missing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women.[21] The U.S. Department of Justice's federal missing persons database logged only 116, roughly 2%, of those cases.[22] And finally, murder is the third leading cause of death for AI/AN Indigenous women. These collective injustices have become known as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+

(MMIWG2S+) epidemic. MMIWG2S+ been exacerbated by systematic racism and largely kept out of media coverage, jurisdictional issues, rural settings, a male dominated society, lack of accurate data collection and management systems, and so much more. It has at times been referred to as a modern form of genocide. In recognizing the near complete failure of institutional and systemic support, Native people are raising awareness and demanding justice through movements.

CNAY has the Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship a virtual storytelling and digital arts program that empowers young Indigenous women and femme-identifying leaders to raise awareness, to honor our sisters and families affected by the MMIWG2S+ epidemic, and to push for better policies that address this crisis.

At the local, state, and national levels advocates are raising their voices and catalyzing change: transforming systems. Family members are raising awareness of their missing and murdered loved ones, Indigenous researchers are finding and closing data gaps, grassroots organizations are establishing various ways to support families while advocating for protection, and law makers are listening.

In 2020, the 116th U.S. Congress passed Savanna's Act which directs the Department of Justice to review, revise and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address the epidemic.[23] That same year, Congress also passed the Not Invisible Act, which is aimed at increasing coordination efforts to reduce violent crime on Native American lands and against Native Americans.[24] The laws and bills are necessary and must continue in order to address this injustice that perpetuates our Native women, girls, and two-spirit relatives.

Economy

Indigenous wealth is rooted in how much we give to our people, and believe that relationship is stronger than ownership with food, animals and land. Prior to European contact, Native people had complex economies that were community and subsistence oriented. Native people had traditional foods and gardens, hunted and trapped various game, and fished various waterways. Some Native communities were place-based, and other nomadic following food sources or seeking

Joslyn V. - R. H.

Savannah F.

Tyra H.

Aspen Elisha Y.H.

temperate weather when seasons changed. Our people had robust trading networks and trading centers where they traded foods, clothing, and other living essentials. Trading increased quality of life, access to goods, and allowed tribes to share knowledge, culture, and language. It also provided tribes more time to focus on family, art and ceremony or other traditional practices.

When Europeans made contact, many welcomed settlers into the trade networks, often trading beads and horses. However, as settlement expanded, Native people and their communities were forcefully displaced from their traditional territories and trade routes were broken down. Indigenous Peoples were stripped of their autonomous economies, and forced to live in one that is rooted in capitalism and ownership.

AIBL, Creative Native artist Darby.

Natives have had more economic growth in the last 30 years than we have ever had in the more than 500-year post-contact history.

- Randall Akee, "Sovereignty and Improved Economic Outcomes for American Indians: Building on the Gains Made since 1990."

The drastic change in lifestyle has continued to result in the Indigenous Peoples being the most poverty stricken racial group in the United States.[25] Today, wealth is defined by colonial terms, recognizing power in finance and ownership including animals, foods and land, and Native people are adapting to build robust wealth in their communities.

As resilient peoples, tribal communities have restored traditional gardens and farms, created food sovereignty initiatives, and have thriving economies that are financially stable and promote tribal sovereignty. Tribal business and enterprises such as cultural tourism, casinos, hotels, restaurants, service stations, sports arenas and more continue to benefit the American economy.

The economic growth is a result of a number of factors centered around the exercising of tribal sovereignty. The catalyst to this era was the passing of the Indian Self- Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975.[26] The act grants tribes ownership of operations, lands, and resources.

Our Lands, Our Connections

Jennifer Peacock and
Isabella TwoCrow

Now more than ever, Native youth are building diverse intergenerational movements to protect and care for Mother Earth. Youth are leading transformation within the climate movement to center traditional ecological knowledge. It is paramount that our collective global response to the climate crisis does not solely focus on mitigation efforts but prevention of environmental destruction.

Protecting our Earth to Protect Culture

Indigenous identity and relations to lands, waterways, and sacred sites are not a monolith. The ability for Indigenous Nations to thrive within the United States correlates directly to their ability to exercise their sovereign rights to natural landscapes, wildlife, and waterways.[27] What are commonly viewed as public lands, like many of the places we know as National Parks, are in reality spaces of spiritual and cultural significance for Indigenous People that have existed for time immemorial. Landscapes change, mountains burn, and waterways run

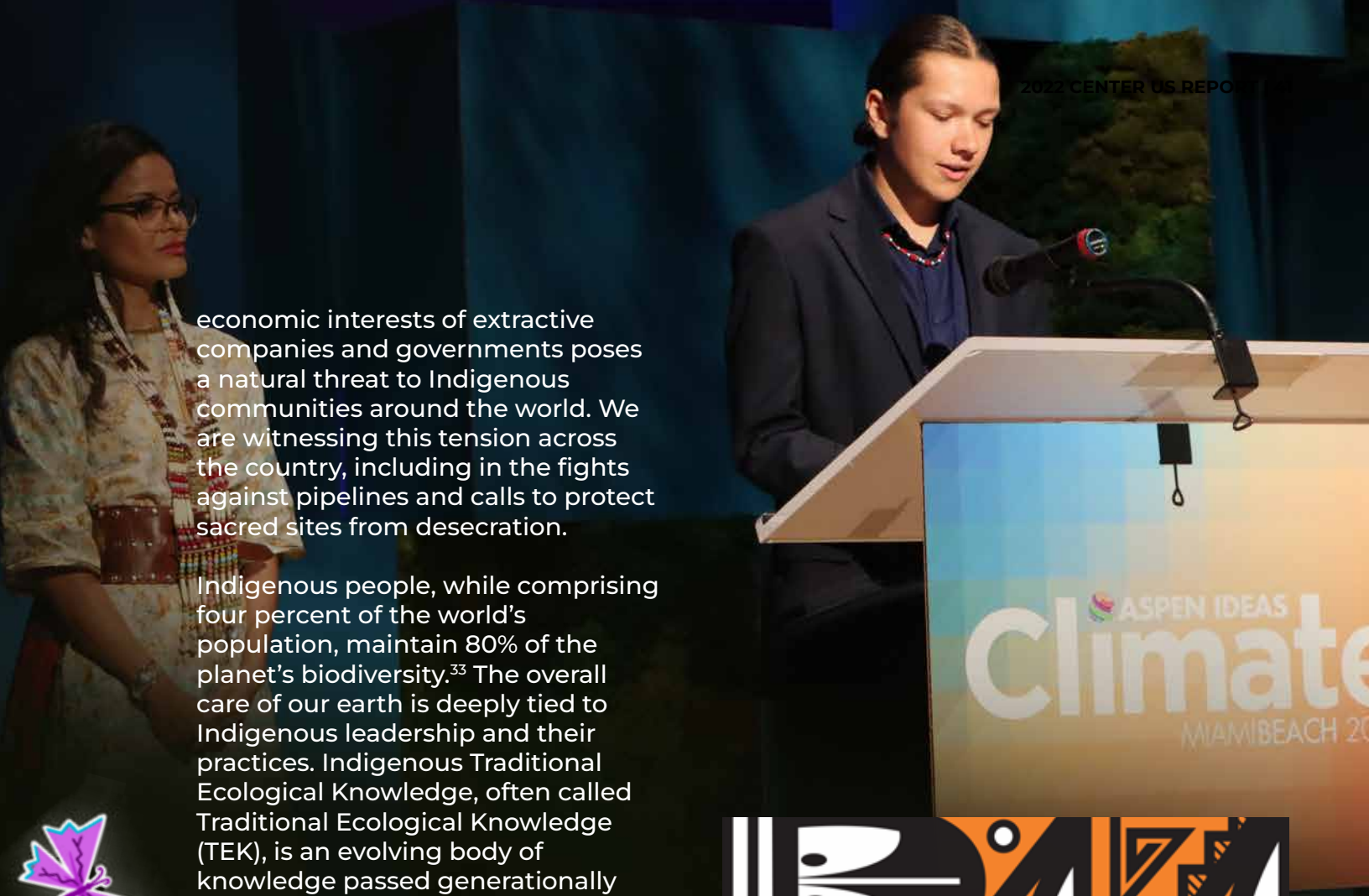
Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

dry; and cultural stories, memories, and practices are at risk. The identities of Indigenous peoples are inextricably linked to the natural world. Land, in particular, is the foundation for cultural reproduction to ensure current and future generations maintain a strong connection to their people. The destructive consequences of climate change impact all of us but disproportionately affect the first stewards of this land.

At noon on April 22, 1889 the Land Rush began on the ancestral lands of the Creek and Seminole Peoples.[28] On this day, 2 million acres of land were open for settlement after being stolen from the Tribal Nations who long lived there. Any settler could claim up to 160 acres of land and receive a title.[29] This moment in history marks a critical perception shift in the ways our nation would come to view the earth. The concept of private ownership of lands and waterways is an Anglo-imposed approach. Indigenous Peoples have long held belief systems about the collective and sacred use of land and water, including thinking of future generations.[30] The value of extraction and perceiving lands as a commodity is deeply embedded in colonial and capitalistic worldviews.

The monetization of our Earth has altered the course of our nation and global society at large. Extractive colonialism is often viewed as the pursuit of economic returns while leaving destruction or overconsumption in its wake.[31] Tribal Nations often live in natural resource rich environments, but they frequently carry the brunt of extractive industries while often receiving little of the wealth they generate.[32] This clear tension of ownership



economic interests of extractive companies and governments poses a natural threat to Indigenous communities around the world. We are witnessing this tension across the country, including in the fights against pipelines and calls to protect sacred sites from desecration.

Indigenous people, while comprising four percent of the world's population, maintain 80% of the planet's biodiversity.[33] The overall care of our earth is deeply tied to Indigenous leadership and their practices. Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge, often called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), is an evolving body of knowledge passed generationally through oral or written means. This expansive knowledge system refers to environmental sustainability and stewardship.[34] It encompasses the multiple relationships humans have with the environment, including plants, animals, landscapes, hunting, fishing, agriculture and more.[35] TEK is essential for our ability to effectively care for natural systems to promote climate adaptation. Scholar Jeanette Armstrong (Syilx Okanagan) explains that the moral imperative to care for the Earth, "is the fundamental meaning of being Indigenous."[36] The foundation of TEK is the relational focus between people and the natural world, rather than individuals being separate from nature. The benefits of traditional ecological knowledge are extensive. A study found that Indigenous-managed lands in the Amazon were known as 'carbon

Pueblo Action Alliance

Pueblo Action Alliance is a community driven grass roots organization that protects Pueblo cultural sustainability and community defense by addressing environmental and social impacts in Indigenous communities. They lead numerous campaigns, including Water Back which works to reclaim water rights in the Southwest. Their efforts are grounded in grassroots organizing while leading with cultural value systems. Pueblo Action Alliance provides workshops and programs grounded in Indigenous Pedagogy.

sinks,' due to the forest's ability to absorb more carbon dioxide (CO2) while state-managed lands emitted more CO2.[37] Research in Australia found that Indigenous Peoples who managed lands and seas, using both ancestral and modern techniques, indicated enhanced well-being. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development highlighted the economic role land played in the lives of Indigenous communities in Canada. Their work shows that by upholding treaty rights and Indigenous land management policies, economic development can increase.[38] Indigenous leadership within the climate space positively influences more than our earth; it improves the overall health, security, and global economy. In the United States, there is growing support for voluntary land taxes to non-Native residents on stolen lands which mirror that of rent or mortgage payments. The Shuumi Land Tax supports the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, which is working to secure a land base for the Chochenyo and Karkin Ohlone people.[39] This tax supports rematriation efforts, community centers, ceremonial spaces, and urban gardens. Real Rent Duwamish allows Seattle settlers to bring financial resources to the Tribal Nation, including educational materials, staff capacity, and upkeep of their Tribal headquarters.[40]

In 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna) and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack issued Secretary's ***Order 3403: Joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Waters.*** The order recognizes that federal lands were owned and managed by Indian Tribes and these lands and waters maintain cultural and natural resources of significance and value to Tribes. This includes sacred sites, burial sites, wildlife, and sources of Indigenous foods or medicines. These lands provide Tribes the right to hunt, fish, gather, and pray as ratified in treaties and agreements with the United States as sovereign nations. The order calls for agencies to increase Tribal participation in the natural stewardship of these lands, and intentionally integrate Indigenous knowledge practices into federal management efforts.[41] In December of 2021, the National Parks Service (NPS) swore in the first Tribal citizen to lead the agency, Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III (Cayuse and Walla Walla, of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation).

Official portrait of Secretary Deb Haaland.

Indigenous leadership in political spaces alongside grassroots advocacy is paramount to build lasting, sustainable changes in our climate.

Indigenous leadership is necessary to not only mitigate, but prevent further climate disasters. We must foster space for cultural land management practices to build resilient, thriving ecosystems. After facing rapid decline in Chinook salmon in the Coquille River, the Coquille Indian Tribe advocated for a larger role in the management of natural resources in Southwest Oregon.[42] This historic agreement was reached between the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Coquille Indian Tribe in June 2022. This agreement provides more power in the management of fish and wildlife throughout the region. Across the United States, wildfires are occurring at an alarming rate. Going back for centuries, Indigenous peoples have used fire as a tool to support the landscape, ecological diversity, and to reduce wildfire.[43] Since 2000, there have been 70,072 wildfires that have burned an annual average of 7.0 million acres. In the state of California, nearly 1.5 million acres of the Sierra Nevada burned last fire season alone. The United States outlawed Indigenous burning practices and implemented fire suppression, including naturally sparked fires.[44] This has caused for build up of vegetation, which allows for fires to spread more rapidly and burn at a higher temperature. Prior to this law, Indigenous communities regularly tended to forests to provide low-intensity, cultural burns to protect the wildlife and vegetation. In May of 2022, the Cloquet Forest located in Minnesota had its first prescribed burn since 2000 of at least an acre.[45] This practice was made possible by the request of the Fond du Lac Reservation, who ultimately received a Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the University of Minnesota. This agreement allowed for a stronger relationship between Tribal leadership, the BIA, and the university.[46] Tribes in California, including the Karuk and Yurok, are working with the Forest Service to manage controlled burns, reclaiming the long-held knowledge that has been used since time immemorial.

Food Sovereignty

The impacts that traditional foods have on the overall physical, mental, and cultural health of our communities cannot be understated. Data shows that one out of every four Indigenous People experience food insecurity compared to one in nine Americans overall.[47] Indigenous approaches to food systems and security differ from the western approach. Often Indigenous People's food systems focus on producing little waste, replenishment of ecosystems, and diversification of crops to benefit the lands.[48] This differs greatly from the common practice of large-scale production and less crop diversification for profit maximization. The Food and Agriculture Department of the United Nations believes a human-rights-based approach to food security has an emphasis on the need to ensure nutrition security, cultural relevance in terms of food choices, preparation and acquisition.[49] This human-centered approach is vital due to the historical reliance on food assistance programs and distributions in Indian Country. These distributions often provide food commodities to low-income Tribal members but frequently offer low nutritional value meals. In 2019, nearly 276 Tribes received benefits through the USDA's Food Distribution Program on Indian

The Stewardship Network
Connect to Conserve

"We've always understood that the heart of conservation and stewardship is local. It's about people using their place-based connections to protect and heal their own ecosystems, but you are not alone. While no one knows your home like you do, there are others doing the same work elsewhere, stewarding their own beloved landscapes, and they have stories to tell. Let's teach each other and our children what we know, show them the power of working together, and watch them do things we never thought possible."
*- Founder and CEO **Lisa Brush.***

Headquartered in Ann Arbor, MI, **The Stewardship Network** (TSN) supports a growing list of Member Communities across the Great Lakes and California.

For the past 20+ years, TSN has supported these helpers, keeping them outside and engaged in the collaborative stewardship of land and water. The Stewardship Network is also a gathering place of knowledge, learning from each Member Community's wins and losses and sharing these lessons widely for the betterment of all.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Reservations (FDPIR) with an average monthly participation of 83,000 individuals.[50] This lack of culturally appropriate foods have led to a rise in chronic health diseases, including some of the highest rates of diabetes.

Food provides Tribal Nations a link to culture and traditional practices. Food security, when approached in a human-rights mindset, ensures Tribal Nations maintain their sovereign rights to hunt, fish, gather, and preserve their own foods. Native youth are leading in the critical efforts to revitalize traditional food systems and build resilient communities. Detroit-based nonprofit American Indian Health and Family Services (AIHFS) is one organization utilizing local solutions alongside young people.[51] Their food sovereignty efforts work in the community to create healthier environments and relationships to traditional foods. Youth like Lauren Poterek (Ojibwe and Walpole Island First Nations), who participates in AIHFS programming, see connections to food as an ability to thrive. "Learning how to cook traditional recipes is a link to my people. It gives us healthier options and brings us together." AIHFS highlights the importance of holistic support by going beyond providing foods, but hosting health and wellness initiatives, cooking classes, and other forms of integrated health efforts. The Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance's Indigenous Seed Keepers (ISKN) works to collect, grow, and share heirloom seeds and plants for future generation. ISKN provides training, mentorship, outreach, and advocacy on seed related policy issues and works with the United States Department of Agriculture's office of Tribal Relations. This partnership focuses on developing seed mills to build two regional Indigenous seed processing hubs, to support local Tribal communities and support future seed hubs.[52] The University of Arkansas Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) is another leader in combating food insecurity by centering Tribal sovereignty. IFAI focuses on tribally-driven solutions to advance traditional food ways while generating economic development.[53] Their work provides Tribal governments, producers,

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

and food businesses with educational resources, policy research, and legal analysis to build strong food economics.[54]

Food exists at the intersection of cultural, mental, and emotional well-being. Young people, like Honuʻāina Nichols (Native Hawaiian), are advocating for systemic and social change for better food systems. "Food sovereignty to me is the future," Honu shared. Honu works on the UCDIVESTTMT campaign under Uprooted and Rising, an organization committed to leading national campaigns for food sovereignty, with a focus on transforming academic institutions' foodways. "I'm proud of young people. My friends and I have grown up to get back to ʻāina (land) and feel a serious responsibility to protect that land." When discussing what is most necessary to transform our foodways to be sustainable and community centered, Honu discussed the necessity of intergenerational spaces. "From a Native Hawaiian perspective there is respect for elders, the younger ones are there to sit and listen to honor them. The same way we honor our human elders, that same mindset is placed on ʻāina as our elder." As our society grapples with how we can build more resilient, intentional foodways we must ensure that our understanding of food is not limited to physical nourishment. "Food is the base of our language," Honu expressed, explaining that food is central to Native Hawaiian

Lauren Poterek (left) and 6.0 Honu Nichols (right).

culture and spirit. "Kalo is our relative. This relationship that we have is one family, it's reciprocity and is binding. Without taking care of the spirit of our food system, we as spiritual and physical beings would die off. We have a deep connection to food systems."

Honu has a passionate vision for the future of their people, including thriving on their ancestral lands and maintaining sovereignty over their waterways, sacred sites, and identity.

"We must actively breathe life into our culture, culture is something that you have to live and perpetuate in order to give life to. There is a false narrative that culture is in the past, and if we're living in culture we're going back to the dark ages, which is based on a colonial mindset. We are the people who have to actively breathe life into again."

Many leaders are taking up the charge to not only restore traditional food ways, but the significance of their preparation. Foods that are often viewed as staples in the western world have been cultivated by Indigenous Nations since time immemorial. Indigenous chefs are reclaiming these practices and building better food systems along the way.

Chef Elena Terry (Ho-Chunk Nation) is the founder of Wild Bearies and works to merge her love of Indigenous foods with community building. Wild Bearies services as an educational, community outreach nonprofit that connects Tribal communities with ancestral foods and cultivation practices.[55]

White Earth Land Recovery Project works to recover the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation. They work to revive Indigenous lifeways and to protect Native seeds, traditional foods, and knowledge. Executive Director, Margaret Rousu, shared, "We, as influencers, must nurture the development of cultural identity in our youth along with encouraging civic engagement to build a more just society for generations to come." White Earth Land Recovery Project provides intergenerational spaces and recognizes the innate connection between the land, culture, and health.

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NĀTIFS) was founded by The Sioux Chef, and is working to address the economic and health crises impacting Tribal communities. Their efforts focus on reimagining a new food system that builds wealth and health outcomes by food-related enterprises.[56] NĀTIFS opened the Indigenous Food Lab, which is a professional kitchen and training center providing support on all aspects of food service. From Indigenous food identification to the gathering, cultivation, and preparation, NĀTIFS ensures that food remains a vital piece of building stronger, prosperous communities.

The intersections of health, culture, and land cannot be ignored when crafting effective policies to build food secure nations. Across the country, Indigenous People are upholding traditional practices to ensure cultural knowledge is transmitted to future generations while nourishing their people.

Our Waters

Water, from our oceans, lakes, to rivers, is increasingly impacted by climate change and man-made destruction. Water is not only essential to our earth and physical health, but to culture and human connection. We are seeing an uptick in natural disasters, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicting the seventh consecutive above-average hurricane season.[57] In July 2021, nearly 41,000 gallons of oilfield wastewater spilled from a broken pipeline in North Dakota, with spillage reaching vital tributaries and other waterways.[58] Our oceans absorb nearly 30% of the carbon dioxide that is released from the burning of fossil fuels, which is leading to more acidic oceans.[59] This is negatively impacting marine life, coasting areas, and prompting a rise in sea levels.[60] In 2021, it was found that thousands of gallons of jet fuel leaked into the drinking water of more than 93,000 residents in Hawai'i due to the Red Hill fuel storage facility.[61] To date, there have been more than 70 leaks since its creation which poses a critical threat to the health and safety to both locals and marine life.[62] Throughout the nation, 49% of Tribal homes lack access to reliable water, clean drinking water, or basic sanitation despite water being a fundamental human right.[63]

Tó Nizhóní Ání "Sacred Water Speaks" is a Diné-led nonprofit organization working to protect the waters of Black Mesa and supporting communities negatively impacted by coal. Their work focuses on maintaining a balanced environment with the elements of life - water, land, air, and sunlight. They lead multiple campaigns, including the Just and Equitable Transition (JET) effort. This initiative focuses on mitigating the economic losses as our nation works to move away from coal and fossil fuels. The campaign includes re-training and jobs for displaced mine and plant workers, replacing coal energy with renewable energy and securing support to transition the Navajo Economy.

The Colorado River Basin touches seven states and provides water to 40 million people.[64] The basin has been impacted by record-setting heat and dry seasons, causing dangerously low levels in recent years.[65] There are thirty Tribes that depend on the basin for cultural and religious practices, wildlife, and power generation. Tribes maintain a legal right to hold and utilize a significant portion of this water, which is directly being impacted by man-made, extractive industries.

Climate change is causing a global phenomenon of forced migration, disrupting individuals traditional habitats, economic stability, and safety. In the United States, Quinault Indian Nation village of Taholah has witnessed the degradation of seawalls and infrastructure.[66] The Quinault are not alone, other coastal Tribes in Washington State, including the Quileute, Hoh, and Shoalwater Bay people are

relocating inland.[67] The Bureau of Indian Affairs projects that $5 billion will be necessary to help Indigenous Nations relocate over the next fifty years. When Indigenous peoples are forced to move, their traditional stories and cultural teachings that are closely tied to the land change and ways of living are disrupted.

There continue to be strides to secure clean, safe drinking water. In 2022, federal officials signed the Utah Navajo Water Rights Settlement, which provides the Navajo Nation with $210 million dollars for drinking water infrastructure.[68] While this is a crucial step in investing in water infrastructure in Indigenous communities, it is vital to the sustainability and care of their land that we do more to protect their stewardship and heritage. Tribes are demonstrating acts of sovereignty and reclamation, such as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana's Flathead Reservation, who made a historic agreement to become the first Tribe to own a large-scale hydro-electric dam.[69] After decades of negotiations, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes finalized a $1.9 billion water rights settlement in September 2021. Secretary Haaland signed the water compact that upheld water rights and authorized federal irrigation projects to modernize infrastructure.[70] While the compact required the Tribe to relinquish thousands of off-reservation water rights claims, the final agreement is the largest amount ever awarded to a Tribe as part of a water rights settlement.[71]

The Future of Climate Justice

Our perceptions of climate change, as a global society, must change. This is an issue of public health, safety, and economics, but we cannot move forward without recognizing the risk of cultural heritage. Climate justice must call to shift our collective values, one from that of ownership and extraction to colective responsibility and reciprocity. We cannot leave behind Indigenous peoples while taking their knowledge and controlling their power and resources.

When our society accepts Indigenous knowledge as equitable to that of its western counterpart, we will see tangible change in the prevention of further climate devastation. Native youth are centering their culture, elders, and future generations in their efforts to care for Mother Earth. A true fight for climate justice is a fight for culture, identity, and sovereignty.

"Some day the earth will weep, she will beg for her life, she will cry with tears of blood. You will make a choice, if you will help her or let her die, and when dies, you too will die."

John Hollow Horn, Oglala Lakota, 1932

Leighanne B.

Alivia O.

Darla C.

Debrah C.

Micah S.

Takoda H.

Paula B.

Jaylee J.

Andrea S.

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Before texting and direct messaging there was telegraphing, and instead of waiting on a blurb of dots on your phone screen to turn into an incoming message, we used to have to wait days, weeks or even months to receive a message from one location to another. Today, the possibilities are nearly endless to communicate, connect, or be entertained. We have access through social media platforms, websites, applications, and more. We are all very well familiar with the satisfaction of hearing a Twitter notification ding on our phone or seeing the likes and comments on a newly posted picture on Instagram, or keeping up with our aunty's on Facebook. Social media has transformed our culture and our communities, as we are able to connect nearly instantly, with all our relatives around the world.

The dictionary definition, according to Merriam-Webster, of social media is the different forms of online communication used by people to create networks, communities, and collectives

Social Media & Technology

Cheyenne Kippenberger and Lily Painter

to share information, ideas, messages, and other content, such as videos (Merriam-Webster, 2022).[72] The evolution of human connection correlates directly with advances in digital technology and within Indian Country, social media and technology is transforming the ways in which we are interacting, teaching, sharing, and even practicing tribal sovereignty.

Social Media

The use of mobile technology and social media applications as a means of community, connection, cultural sharing, and as an educational tool has been embraced amongst all the generations of the Native community, but especially Native youth. When COVID-19 pandemic ripped through our world in 2020, mobilization efforts to stay connected in meaningful, cultural ways popped up all over the internet. From cultural zoom classes to virtual powwows to Tik Tok challenges, we found our communities mirror the intergenerational resiliency and resourcefulness our ancestors put forth in the face of difficult times.

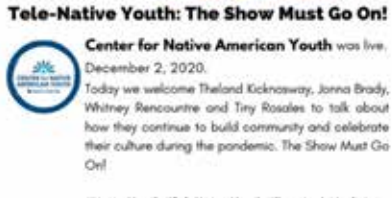
Photo courtesy of CNAY.

Facebook community groups, such as Social Distance Powwow, were forerunners in curating exciting, cultural spaces for all of Indian Country to spectate or participate in the community events that were no longer physically available to us. Today, the Social Distance Powwow page, founded by Dan Simonds, Stephanie Hebert, and Whitney Rencountre in March of 2020, has more than 300,000 members showcasing Indigenous culture, arts, and bringing together community. Community pages across social media platforms have aided in bridging the gap of accessibility for tribal members who do not live on reservations or close to their community in staying up to date on community announcements and connecting with other tribal members. Uses of these pages have also enhanced the outreach that communities have with their members.

Media technologies and social media have created new avenues for Native people to share their unique cultures and perspectives, but also preserve language, document modern history, debunk misperceptions, and shift the narrative of Native people. In a conducted study, Native

youth expressed both experience and interest in accessing cultural information specific to American Indian and Alaska Natives (Rushing, S. C., & Stephens, D., 2011).[73] We learned in the Indigenous Futures Survey that social media is the primary source of news for Native youth. Additionally, 75% of participants reported socializing with Indigenous friends frequently or all the time. A movement of online learning and connecting has progressively been building since social networking websites were first gaining popularity in the early 2000s. Today, the most prominent social media apps or platforms (within Indian Country) consist of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok, and Snapchat.

As more accurate Native representation saturates media and virtual spaces, young Native people have been breaking down stereotypical misconceptions of Native and Indigenous people by using their online presence as a means of empowerment. Tik Tok star, Tia Wood, has surmounted a following of 2.3 million by sharing music, skits, and glimpses into her life as a young Cree and Salish woman. Another young Indigenous woman taking the internet by demand is international model and environmental activist Quannah Chasinghorse-Potts. Armed with her Yidįįłtoo, traditional tattoos of her Hän Gwich'in heritage, she has redefined beauty standards in the modeling world and uses her platform to advocate for the Alaska Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and land protections.



Tia Wood's TikTok account.
Quannah Rose Chasinghorse-Potts' Instagram post.
Tele-Native Youth at CNAY
Quannah Rose Chasinghorse-Potts' Instagram post.

The diversity, the beauty, and the stories of Native and Indigenous people are authentically being shared through tweets, videos, photos, and posts everywhere. The internet and social media has served as a conduit and tool in connecting community, culturally sharing and exchanging, but also educating the masses. Today, social media is an integral part of how people connect with friends and family, but

for Native and Indigenous people in the United States the connectivity and accessibility to broadband is not so simple.

Advancing Technology

Access to the Internet

According to a 2018 survey, only 67% of Native Americans had a broadband subscription, compared with 82% of non-Native individuals (US Census Bureau, 2018).[74] Just more than half of Native Americans living on reservations- which is around 22% of the American Indian and Alaska Native population- had broadband ("American Indian/ Alaska Native - the Office of Minority Health.," 2022).[75] Internet access disparities within Native communities are not just a basic issue of not having internet within homes, but also an issue of infrastructure, education models, public safety, economic development, and health. The pandemic certainly brought this issue to the forefront as tribal council meetings were being held virtually and virtual medical appointments

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

are becoming the norm. Even communities that had broadband infrastructures in place prior to the pandemic felt the strain because the in place structures could not handle the volume of users. Internet has been classified as a utility and is the basis for all media platforms. Indian Country has suffered a lack of this necessary infrastructure due to the failure of the U.S. government to ensure funding and support in these developments for tribal nations. Broadband is a critical infrastructure for tribal communities and nation building and models that are most successful in Indian Country, are not based on individual residential service models, but on communal centric models.

How do we bridge the digital divide in Indian Country? Is it by allowing Indigenous nations to construct their own internet service providers? The goal of Community Broadband Network at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance is not to just address the digital divide through their report, but to encourage development and enact tribal sovereignty. By owning and operating necessary resources for internal infrastructure such as spectrum, the radio frequencies that wireless signals use to travel, Tribal communities can boost their local economies and keep their power and data within their own nations, rather than relying on an external provider. Historically, the federal government has attempted to control these resources rather than recognizing that they fall under the scope of treaty obligations or that they have an ongoing responsibility to uphold these resources for the benefit of Tribal communities.

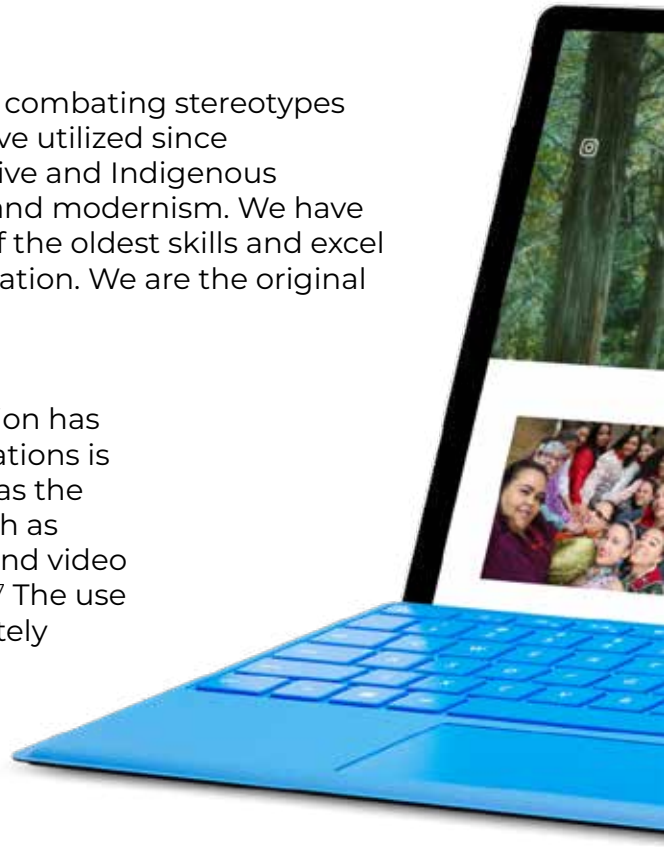
"I could spend a lifetime reading off the names of our stolen sisters, but the empty spaces do all the talking if you take the time to acknowledge them."

-Evynn Ksé:hahiyé Richardson

Currently, there are approximately 40 tribally owned networks, according to the Community Broadband Network at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance study, spanning across the boundaries of 65 Native nations. Another 37 Native nations are working in partnership with private providers. Many Native nations lack the financial support to execute private internet service providers and are at the mercy of USDA or grants. In an attempt to address broadband inequality, the Federal Communications Commission created the Rural Tribal Priority Window in February of 2020 for tribal communities to apply for free 2.5GHz spectrum licenses (Douglas, 2021).[76] With over 400 applications, the interest and need for these internet infrastructures is apparent to provide Tribal nations the opportunity to economically thrive and empower their community members.

Digital Storytelling

One of the greatest tools Native people have in combating stereotypes and invisibility, is the very tool our ancestors have utilized since immemorial. It is the tool of storytelling. As Native and Indigenous people, we dance on the line of traditionalism and modernism. We have mastered what it is to be knowledge keepers of the oldest skills and excel within the adolescent systems of western education. We are the original storytellers.



A project born out of the MMIWG2S+ movement, matriarch medicine is a collection of love for Native women and femmes who are here, a means of carrying on the love for those who are not, and a space for healing and homage to our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2Spirit+ relatives.

Within the digital age, the transformation of communication, accessibility, and even education has occurred; but of the most incredible transformations is storytelling. Digital storytelling can be defined as the art of storytelling with multimedia features such as photography, text, audio, voiceover, hypertext and video (Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling, 2019).[77] The use of media, mediums, and platforms has completely remodeled how an audience can connect with a story and Native people are sharing and reaching audiences across the world because of the accessibility that online avenues provide. Shannon Smith from the Native Daughters project shared on the importance of storytelling, "Storytelling is a diverse and powerful medium of imagery and description, and continues to provide the foundation of understanding Native culture through the diffusion of ideas and history through themes, as well as give guidance to the role of women as protectors of culture and values. Storytelling is both the key and the door to another time, people and culture. For cultures with no written language until post-contact, stories illustrated the lives and values of Native peoples. The stories provide perspective on life in America before contact, and stories reflect the dramatic changes to life after outside influence. Storytelling's role in piecing together the past is important, but also, modern storytelling's continued importance in Native culture shows the significance of changes to values, daily life and perspective" (Native Storytellers Connect the Past and the Future : Native Daughters).[78]

Digital storytelling gives voice to experiences and perspectives that are historically ignored by mainstream society and combats the dominant narratives that are placed upon Native and Indigenous people. The Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship, launched by Center for Native American Youth in 2021, is a virtual storytelling and digital arts program

empowers young Indigenous women femme-identifying leaders to raise awareness, to honor our sisters and affected by the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Relatives (MMIWG2S+) epidemic, and for better policies that address this The Remembering Our Sisters Fellows tasked with creating projects that increase visibility and action to end MMIWG2S+ epidemic and advance to end violence against Indigenous women and people. The fellows successfully created documentaries, websites, toolkits, and artwork.

A member of the first cohort of Remembering Our Sisters Fellows is Lily Painter, Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, launched the website "Matriarch Medicine." A project born out of the MMIWG2S+ movement, Matriarch Medicine is a collection of love for Native women and femmes who are here, a means of carrying on the love for those who are not, and a space for healing and homage to our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2Spirit+ relatives. Lily shared that selected stories from the Matriarch Medicine collective will be developed into a series of films and documentaries titled, The Remembering Project. The series will "detail the numerous ways in which members of the Native community deal with loss. Whether it is through the means of art, dance, cooking, vocations and more- the journey of navigating life without those who have gone to the other world is a process that is isolating and lonely. By shedding light on the ways in which we move forward, The Remembering Project hopes to open a conversation on coping with loss within the Native community and offer a space for healing through the telling of these stories of resilience."

Evynn Ksé:hahiyé Richardson of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe and Nansemond Indian Nation, a Remembering Our Sisters Fellow, created and designed a toolkit to encourage and guide individuals that are willing to use art to uplift stolen relatives and spread awareness of the injustices they have faced and continue to face. The toolkit, Using Art for Activism, ensures individuals are being mindful of those directly affected, culture and more while also encouraging respect for the stories told through art. Shared within the toolkit is historical context, present day impacts, resources, and guidance on intentional allyship. In addition to the toolkit, Evynn also launched an

art campaign to share MMIWG2S+ based art called The Empty Space Project. It is her hope to create a safe space for the healing of our communities and she believes art can help do that. “If we take the time to listen to the stories of the people impacted by this issue, we honor the voices of those who were taken too soon from us. Their memories can live on in the artwork we create and it is the goal of this project to create a positive platform for this type of work.”

To break down negative stereotypes, debunk misconceptions, and control the narrative, spaces for young people, such as the Remembering Our Sisters fellows, must be made and honored. Traditionalism in this modern world is no new challenge to our communities. Since first contact, we have been given no choice but to be resilient and resourceful in all aspects of our lives. We created frybread when we were denied hunting rights. We danced and sang in secret when we were denied religious freedoms. We will pass on our stories whether that be together sitting around the fire, sharing a Facebook video, or listening to a podcast because our stories are who we are. We are the original storytellers.

Mukurtu is a grassroots project to empower communities to manage, share, narrate, and exchange their digital heritage in culturally relevant and ethically-minded ways.

Using Tech for Cultural Preservation

At the core of teachings for Native and Indigenous people is the responsibility to preserve and practice our cultures. We have been taught that our lives, languages, and teachings are gifts from the Creator or Breathmaker- gifts that we pass on from generation to generation. Bonnie Jane Maracle, of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Nation, said “For a nation of people, with their language threading throughout the various components of their society, what exudes from that nation is its overall Culture—its way of doing things, its way of seeing the world (worldview), its way of believing, its values. As a result, when the nation experiences a “shift” in its language by the interjection of another language, the original Culture is correspondingly interrupted and skewed towards a new way of doing things, seeing things, and believing. This change has been named “colonization,” when writing for Indian Country Today.

Practices to preserve culture have expanded from the traditional settings of community culture centers and the passing of teachings within households. Today, there are state of the art programs available

to communities and their members accessible through their personal cellular devices. Colonization has continually threatened the way Native and Indigenous people speak, eat, think, and live, but Native and Indigenous people have also continually adapted practices and efforts to protect our ways of life. Zoom classes, recordings, podcasts, phone applications, and online resources have modernized the ways in which we teach, interact, and preserve Indigenous culture and languages. As we have had to navigate assimilation into modern society, our children have also had to adapt how they learn and absorb knowledge. In addition to the threats and challenges that colonization has forced upon us, the pandemic brought forth its own challenges.

Our children were struggling with educational attainment due to the counterintuitive learning style that hybrid teaching is.Traditional forms of education practiced within Native and Indigenous communities has always been a collaborative intertwining of cultural teachings and what is now considered the core curriculum of education. Our children were taught astrology while using the stars to navigate trails, they learned music while attending ceremony, and experienced botany medicinal care while watching the medicine person treat their sick uncle.

As we as a society adapt to a hybrid style of learning, teaching, and interacting there has also been online resources like the website Indigikitchen.com have encouraged an appreciation and love of traditional Native foods by sharing pre-contact recipes made with traditional ingredients through cooking videos. Mariah Gladstone, a former Champion for Change at CNAY and founder of Indigikitchen, wanted to connect Native people to their culinary culture and “reminds us of the inherent worth of our identities while fueling our physical bodies. Indigenous food systems support healthier ecosystems, bodies, and families.”

Native and Indigenous communities have embraced technologies and social media as a means to connect, share cultural heritage, and language. At a time where Indigneous languages are in danger of disappearing, creating modern preservation strategies are of the utmost importance to ensure future generations have cultural resources available to them. “Tribes are creating digital repositories of language and online cultural learning tools,” says Dr. Traci Morris, director of the American Indian Policy Institute at Arizona State University and member of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Nation has partnered with Rosetta Stone to develop courses for tribal members, free of charge and available online or by CD’s, if they do not have internet access.

Tik Tok star, Tia Wood, has surmounted a following of 2.3 million by sharing music, skits, and glimpses into her life as a young Cree and Salish woman.

Other tribal communities are facilitating online culture classes through Zoom and other online platforms, creating community Facebook and Instagram pages to share "words of the day" or videos with pronunciations and sentence usage. Although some of these efforts were outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic, they served as a bridge to gap the inaccessibility of some community members and have enhanced the outreach that Tribal Nations have with their community.

Indian Country is taking advantage of the technology available by recording oral histories, creating digital archives of language, developing online cultural learning tools, and even hosting Tribal community meetings virtually.

Kimberly Christen, director of the Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University, says "Technology is really the secondary part of language preservation and broader cultural heritage reclamation," she explains. "It's about those community members on the ground every day doing the work." Technology is a tool for Tribal Nations in the mission to revitalize, preserve, and share cultural heritage.

The Future of Culture

From generation to generation, Native and Indigenous Peoples have made sacrifices and efforts to break intergenerational cycles, preserve culture and language, and navigate living in a world where we were not wanted nor welcomed. In the face of disease, forced removal, and violence we never strayed away from practicing or preserving our teachings.

We have always been storytellers, doctors, astronomers, botanists, chefs, and scholars. And now, in the face of this digital age, we continue to practice that same resiliency and resourcefulness that our ancestors did and we practice and preserve who we are and what we know. The intersection of culture and technology is one that will aid in the mission of cultural preservation and ensuring that our future generations will have access to language, oral histories and stories, music, art, and culture.

Nevaeh W.

Ohya W.

WIlliam J.C.

Photo courtesy of Shane Brown/FX

Opening Up a Crucial Conversation Through Art. Statistics are not just numbers, they represent our real friends and family members.

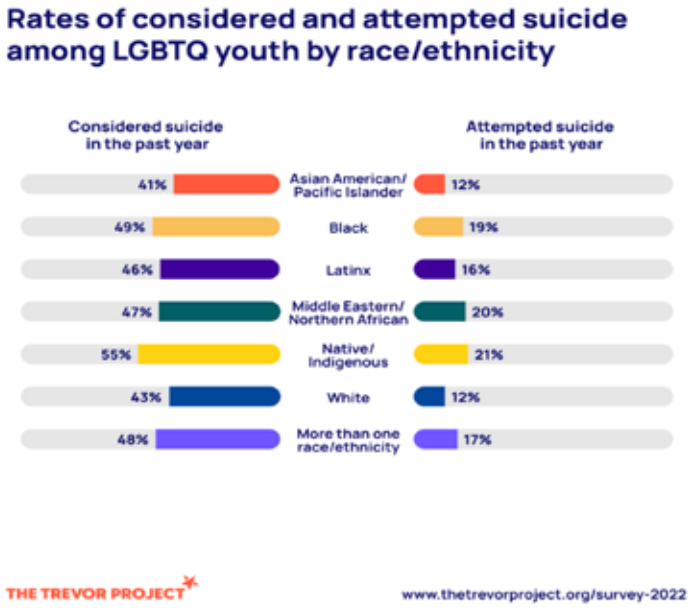
For Indigenous People, art is a space to use their voice, uplift identity, honor ancestral teachings and tradition, and express culture. Artistry existed prior to European contact and has been a mechanism to build resilient tribal nations in the face of colonialism. When we discuss the arts, it's imperative we recognize that art supports mental health and well-being, increases representation, and actively preserves culture. The ability to create exists within all of us, and in the next generation. Native youth have used creativity as a means to positively impact their lives, their community, and our society.

Arts & Society

Zianne Richardson and Chenoa Scippio

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Art can be a valuable tool to process feelings, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance self-esteem.[79] For Native youth, art can play a role to support mental health and increase healthy coping strategies. Native American and Alaska Natives face the highest rates of suicide compared to any other racial and ethnic group.[80] A study found that of the Native American population that commits suicide, 40% of them are young people aged 15 to 24 years old.[81] In a survey conducted by the Trevor Project, 55% of the LGBTQ2S+ Native youth surveyed had thought about committing suicide, while 21% of all Native participants had attempted suicide. This being the highest of all ethnic or racial groups represented in the survey.[82] While this data provides a snapshot into the challenges facing our youth, young people are utilizing the arts to build vibrant, thriving communities.



Rates of considered and attempted suicide amount LGBTQ youth by race/ethnicity, The Trevor Project

Youth are weaving traditional and modern practices into the behavioral health field to create culturally appropriate mechanisms of support.[83] The use of the arts is one critical tool to ensure the health and safety of Native youth today.

While there are many resources to increase mental health for Native youth, art is one of the most accessible. Art as therapy can be applied in numerous ways, from sculpting, painting, drawing, to using textiles. Through creativity, Native artists can often address mental health challenges by channeling emotions into outward expression. According to mental health experts, the best ways to improve well-being are reducing stress, finding ways to learn something new, being creative, spending time in nature, and connecting with other people.[84] Native artistic practices are intertwined with materials from nature, creativity, and finding spiritual significance in the world and life events.[85] Creating a piece of art can represent symbols of belonging for Native people that inspire greater feelings of pride in identity and ultimately increase one's sense of belonging.[86]

In East Los Angeles, IndigenARTS and Wellness launched to give Native people a Native-centered space to learn to heal intergenerational trauma through

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

traditional art practices. For example, one of their workshops prompted participants to bead a medallion of a picture of a family member that had passed away.[87] It is art used as therapy in this way that connects art to healing for individuals and for the community.

Representation & Media

Representation in film, television, and media at large is vital for building positive social perceptions. 0.4% of primetime TV and film have a Native character.[88] We are now witnessing a reckoning in the media, with breakout television series and films, like Reservation Dogs, Dark Winds, Prey, and Rutherford Falls, gaining large-scale acclaim. Indigenous people expressing their art through performance has created an inclusive space for storytelling and culture for our collective society. Data from the Indigenous Futures Survey found that 32.4% of Native youth identified increasing accurate contemporary representation of Indigenous People in media, government, and education as extremely urgent.[89] Stories that appear across mediums affect how we see others

and view ourselves.[90] Native youth recognize that positive representation increases self-esteem and the strength of their communities. When our nation sees Native people accurately portrayed they have a better opportunity to celebrate their contemporary contributions to the arts and society at large.

While media and social media platforms are some of the main sources of widespread misrepresentation today, they can also be used to combat negative portrayals of Native people. An effective approach to dismantling these inaccurate perceptions of Native people can be through the use of personal narratives.[91] A personal narrative can be defined as an individual's portrayal of a story that describes their life and experience.[92] Narratives have power to alter the way we live and transform the institutions that impact our daily lives. These narratives can be shared in many ways and one of the most powerful examples of this is art. Art acts as the platform to create a personal narrative, allowing others to learn their life journey or cultural history. Each time we interact with large-scale media and center Native voices and stories, we are allowing a transfer of knowledge and healing.

Native representation is seen through multiple outlets, including news, podcasts, poetry, music, film, and design.

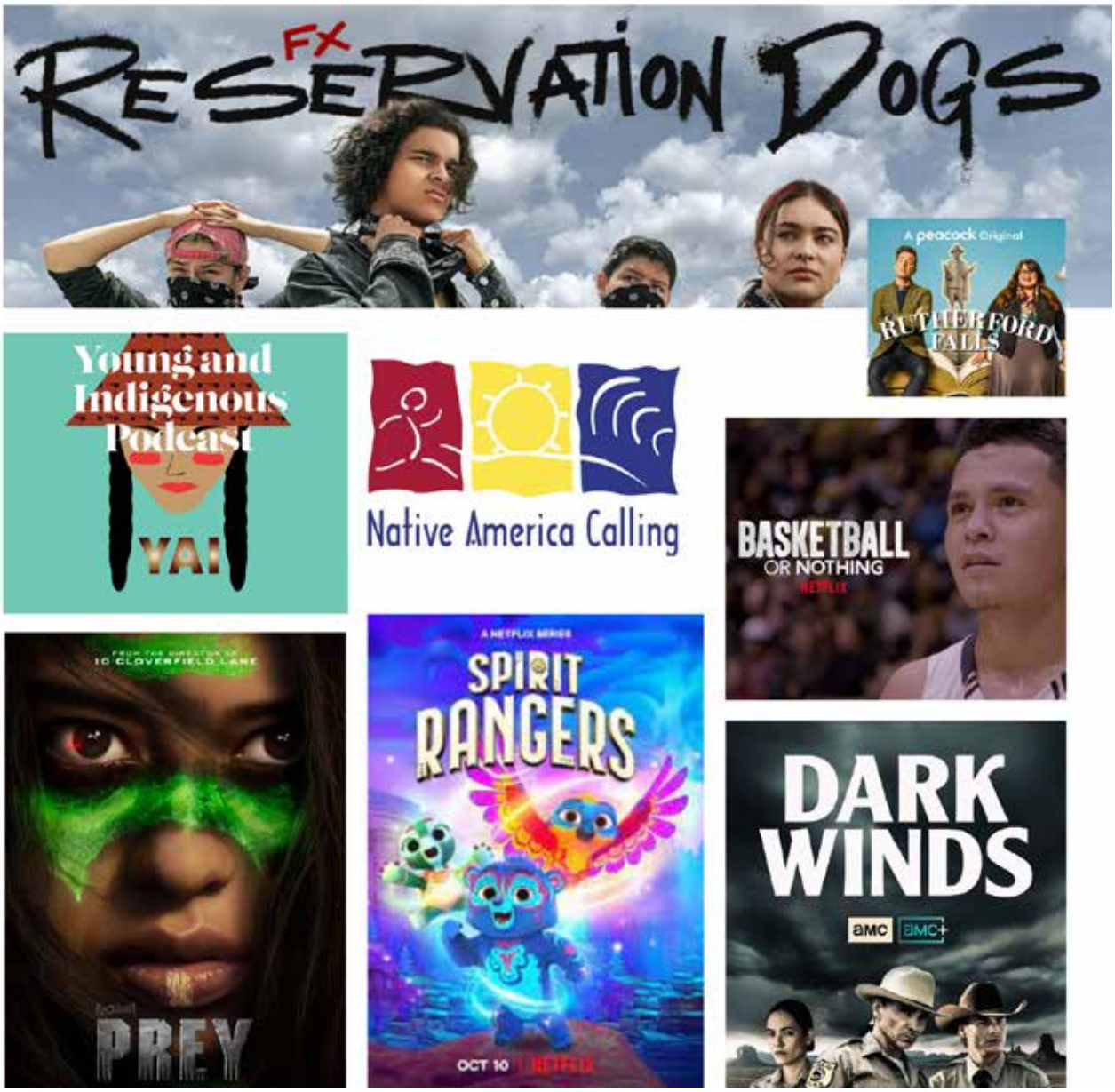
"We're here because we know the power of arts to both transform and preserve, to uplift and energize, to teach and reveal. Most importantly, we know the power of arts to build empathy, create belonging, and connect us across tribe, race, gender, age, ethnicity, town, state, and country."

-Lulanni Arquette (Native Hawaiian), during the 2020 Conference of the Native Arts and Culture Foundation

Native youth are engaging with these mediums and showing the power of personal story. Kinsale Hueston (Navajo), a 22-year-old Yale graduate, is an award-winning poet that has not only written poems about her identity and experience as a Diné woman, but conducted poetry workshops for other Native youth to feel inspired to do the same. She edited the book Where I'm From: Poems from Sherman Indian School with poems from her poetry workshops in addition to her own. Podcasts that are written and produced by Native people are becoming more prevalent.

Native youth are using podcasts as a way to elevate their voices and share their experiences with their communities. The Young and Indigenous is a podcast created by youth of the Lummi Nation of Washington. This group of young leaders created this podcast to encourage unity in their tribal community, give space for youth to share their stories, preserve culture, and learn their language.[93] They also hope to educate those outside of their community about who they are as Lummi youth.

Native Public Media in partnership with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, organized and launched 60 Native radio stations in addition to 40 other



From radio, podcasts, television, streaming, and movies, Indigenous creative expression has launched itself off the canvas and on the screen.

independent Native radio stations. Native America Calling, a live call-in program that connects radio stations, Internet, and radio listeners to discussion forums about issues plaguing Indian Country today.[94] These radio platforms give Native people the agency to share stories, an important art mechanism for cultural sharing and preservation. The Urban Auntie Show is both a radio show and podcast that is amplifying Alaska Native issues and topics while featuring guests across Alaska. It's broadcast weekly on KSUA 91.5 FM. The show is hosted by Laura Ekada (Koyukon Athabascan), who is using this platform to uplift the voices and lived-experience of Indigenous nations in Alaska.[95]

The Center for Native American Youth hosts the annual Creative Native Call for Art to support young creatives.

This initiative engages Native artists ages 5 - 24 years old and provides them with a national platform to spotlight their work. Aydrian Day (Hochunk, Lakota, Potawatomi, Odawa, and Ojibwe) won the 5-9 category in 2019 with intricate beadwork. "I grew up knowing I belong to an awesome, strong culture. We are the future and with our art we will make our people even stronger." In 2020, Aydrian went on to win the 2020 Virtual Santa Fe Indian Market People's Choice Award for his beadwork.

"It's a big honor to be the people's choice award winner at the age of 10," he shared. "My piece represents my life and all the experiences that have occurred. The galaxy represents the ancestors who went on to the spirit world."

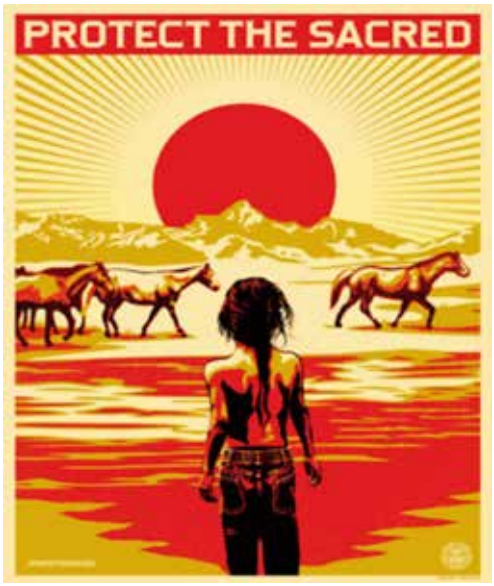
Youth like Aydrian are paving professional paths forwards into the arts field, while creating designs and work that center their past, present, and future.

In recent years, Indigenous fashion design has become increasingly popular. A number of Native designers have used their art as a way to bring their voice and vision to the fashion industry. Designers like Norma Baker Flying-Horse (Hidatsa, Dakota Sioux, and Assiniboine), Tracie Jackson (Diné), Lauren Good Day (Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree), and Dante Biss-Grayson (Osage) are just some of the talented designers breaking industry barriers. Their designs not only highlight traditional styles, but present challenges to existing perceptions of fashion. The use of traditional designs and methods in design can be accompanied by the contemporary styles of today.

Learning Through Art

Indigenous ways of knowing show us that education can exist outside of a traditional classroom. Art is a powerful educational tool. The use of the arts in higher education, classes, workshops, and camps is becoming more common. At Leech Lake Tribal College, students can take pottery, jingle dress making, introduction to beadwork, and moccasin making classes. At Nueta, Hidatsa, Sahnish College, students can enroll in Native American art, literature, and singing courses as part of their degree requirements. The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture serves as a hub for the history, culture, and art of Natives in the Southwest United States. They strive to give recognition to the diverse Native peoples in their artwork, cultures, and intellectual achievements.[96] The museum offers youth enrichment programs, such as film camp. The Native youth film camp supports young artists growing in media and fosters intentional space for Indigenous creativity.

The Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico is another space that continues to uplift young Native creatives. IAIA is a tribal college whose mission is to, "empower creativity and leadership in Native Arts and cultures through higher education, life-long learning and outreach." As an art school that is Native-centered, they offer a curriculum that provides opportunities to learn and grow in



Protect the Sacred artwork.

traditional and contemporary forms of art.[97] Native students build upon their skills in their craft and connect to culture through art and education. There are a number of arts programs and camps for Native youth to get involved in. The Indigenous Arts Summer Encounter is a free five day program for Indigenous and Hispanic youth to learn about who they are as Native people through traditional arts. Each day youth learn a different art technique and are given the opportunity to learn theater, songs, mural painting, danza (a Taino ballroom dance style), and storytelling.[98] By the end of the camp, youth would have created a project in each of these art forms. Art being used as a vessel for learning gives Native youth a resource to learn more about who they are and a traditional way to express themselves. Art teaches, promotes healing, and supports emotional development.

Arts & Cultural Preservation

Culture is a strong protective factor for Native American youth.[99] A protective factor is an individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events. Art serves as a major connection to culture, through complex mediums and platforms, Native youth are able to in their identity and cultural tradition. Art is woven into our cultural items, ceremonies, songs and stories. Since time immemorial, everyday Indigenous life has been, and continues to be, filled with art. The arts in Native culture appear in numerous ways, from storytelling, pottery, to intricate beadwork or

Photo courtesy of CNAY.

The Onaman Collective, created in collaboration by artists **Christi Belcourt** (Métis) and **Isaac Murdoch** (Ojibwe), is a social arts and justice organization of artists and environmentalists. The collective is focused on integrating land-based art creation with traditional knowledge alongside youth, elders, and the Anishnaabemowin and Cree languages.

Their work includes a variety of mediums, including traditional tattoos, how to use and create sacred paints, canoe building, and birch harvesting. Their emphasis on community and young people allows them to make a powerful impact on the next generation.

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Evynn Richardson (Haliwa-Saponi and Nansemond) was part of the inaugural cohort of Remembering Our Sisters Fellows. For her project, Evynn created the Using Art for Activism toolkit. This toolkit provides various tips and resources to support individuals wanting to use art to uplift our stolen relatives and spread awareness of the injustices they have faced and continue to face.

The toolkit works to ensure individuals are being mindful of those directly affected by this epidemic. The guide centers the importance of respect for the stories told through art.

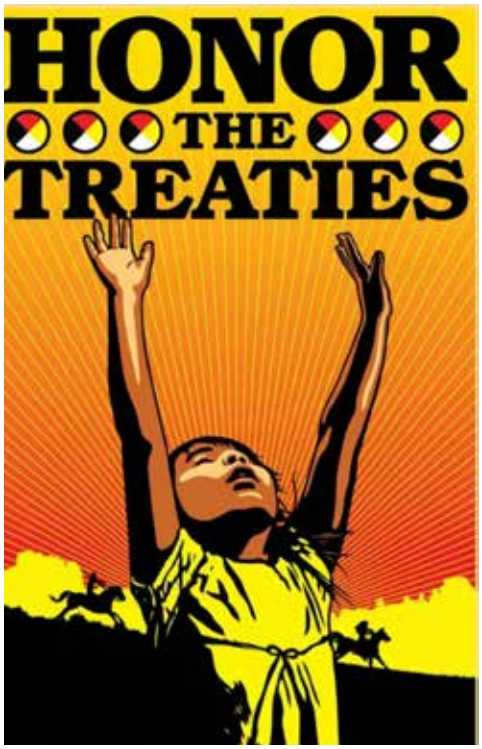
sewing practices. Indigenous artists are using both traditional and contemporary art forms to preserve culture. The arts play a critical role in sharing truths and lived experiences. Digital storytelling and designs particularly equip individuals to share about culture, histories, and land. As more and more Native artisans break barriers, they are preserving culture in a tangible way. Joy Harjo (Mvskoke), the United States Poet Laureate, gave a keynote address at the Native Arts and Culture Foundation conference where she described the interconnectedness of Native art and humanity, relationship to land, and systems of knowledge that have been in existence since time immemorial.[100] As Joy Harjo described, the art that is created by Native youth has their spirit connected to it–their personhood. That is preservation of people as well as culture through art.

Artists serve as cultural ambassadors and knowledge keepers, their medium a vessel to connect tradition to those who the art interacts with. Indigenous art and creativity is an invaluable asset to strengthening our society. It serves as historical records, which we can see with the use of winter counts. These counts are a series

of pictographs that capture historical happenings in communities that have been used for centuries. Indigenous art can tell stories, such as creation origins; it can also preserve languages, such as in ceremonial practices and social songs. Every creation of art is a piece of culture that strengthens tribal nations and highlights their resilience. As modern art mediums continue to be recognized and celebrated, Native youth utilize those mediums to build upon ways that preserve culture and uplift their identity.

Civic Engagement

Native youth understand the importance in engaging civically. This can be seen through acts of peaceful protests, voting, and community organizing to shape better policies for their people. Social movements such as protection of land, water, and air, and raising awareness on violence against Native women are rooted in civic engagement. One of the most pressing issues in recent history that created global action was the Dakota Access Pipeline, where youth used art as a mechanism to action. In 2016, advocates used photography, silkscreening, and built an art space amid the demonstration.[101] Additionally, the Center for Native American Youth created the Remembering Our Sisters Fellowship, a digital art and storytelling initiative that supports Native youth in creating projects that are rooted in raising awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit epidemic.



Honor the Treaties artwork.

Honor the Treaties Artwork.

Art as activism moves us to bring about societal change. Posters, billboards, songs, or spoken word poetry can bring about action and call for policy change. Honor the Treaties is an organization that works with other advocacy groups to center Native art while using it for activism.[102] The organization provides funding for Native artists and advocacy groups to collaborate in order to reach a wider audience, because they recognize that art holds the power to open an individual's mind.[103] Young people are utilizing traditional and contemporary creativity to advance the causes they care about most. The Center for Native American Youth's Democracy is Indigenous organizer, Jacob Cousin (Oglala Lakota), has embodied this type of innovative creativity for change. For his first project, Jacob designed banners with diverse imagery that were hung across the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation promoting the 2020 Census. This reservation covers more than 2.8 million acres, and by using eye-catching designs Jacob was able to amplify the census on a large scale across the reservation. Jacob went on to work with peers in his

community prior for another initiative focusing on the well-being of his peers. In an effort to advance culturally-grounded mental health and self-care, Jacob created pop-socket beading packets for youth in their community. Alongside his peers, they centered the Lakota Medicine Wheel for this virtual gathering to teach youth how to bead the custom pop-socket, learn more about the medicine wheel, and discuss the policies necessary to better invest in mental health resources.

Young leaders like Jacob, who are using their craft to foster change, are leading the way in creative approaches to changemaking. Youth must have the creative agency to develop initiatives that best meet the emotional, social, and physical needs of their community. We have seen youth bead, sew, implement murals, design their own clothing - and so much more, all in the name of their culture. It is vital that Native artists have paths forward to use their skills to build lasting, positive change.

Conclusion

Native youth are leading the way in the preservation of culture and advancing their communities. As the arts continue to be celebrated in our society, Native artists must have great visibility. These young artists are designing the futures they wish to see, and are sharing their power through art. To support young people is to create inclusive spaces for artistic Native youth, and nurture their creativity. The arts touch all aspects of life, and Native youth are ensuring their people are at the forefront.

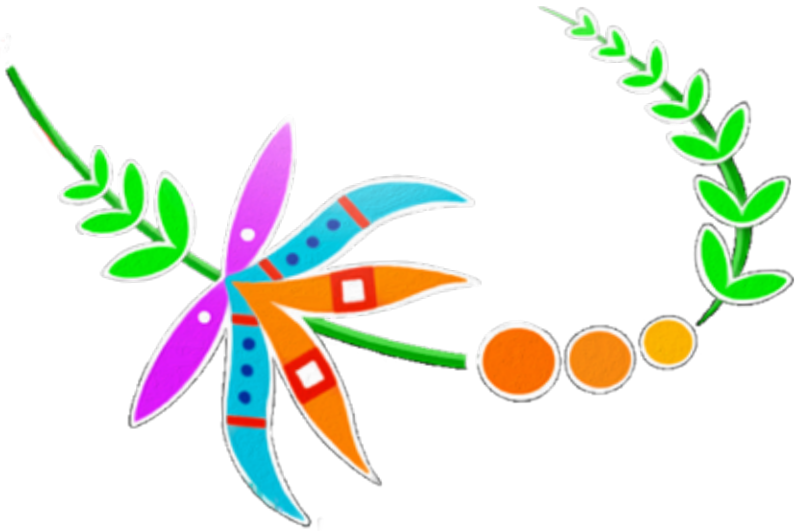


Photo courtesy of CNAY.

FOOTNOTES

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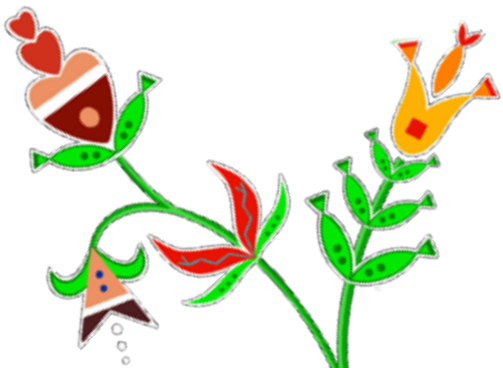

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