



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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While the world was contracting and organizations were pulling inward or shutting down, we adapted so quickly. We found ways to safely keep working. We added new staff, we expanded giving, we stepped into our new land in Sonoma County, and we worked to safely navigate lockdowns, fire alerts, and evacuations to serve our Native communities with fresh, healthy foods and seeds.

Everywhere we looked, we saw community needs amplified – food security, safety, elder support, youth support. As a team, we were committed to gently finding the right way to move forward, to listen, to connect, and to serve. The gift of the land helped us do that. That was pretty exceptional.

– Sara Moncada, Chief Program Officer

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## MISSION / VISION

Our mission is to protect and restore Indigenous cultures, empowering them in the direct application of traditional knowledge and practices on their ancestral lands.



## LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

2020 WAS A TIME OF ABRUPT CHANGE for the world and for all of us. It felt like the world turned upside down. It required a new type of adaptability. At The Cultural Conservancy, we are blessed to be strengthened by our Indigenous traditions of resilience, and the pandemic encouraged us to follow those original instructions even more seriously by deepening our kinship with our local community and the Native land we steward, and do this together in reciprocity.

2020 was a time to stop and slow down, to listen to the land and listen to each other. We heard it was a time for elemental support: good clean food, water, medicine, communications, transportation, mutual aid, humor, and friendship. It was a time to embody reciprocity in a whole new way, trading tea for toilet paper, books for bananas, and stories over Zoom. It was a time to re-assert our Indigenous rights and solidarity networks to create the kind of beautiful world we want to live in and leave to our children and all the children of Mother Earth.

It was a time to strengthen our internal and external relations. One of our priorities was expanding our leadership with distributed power and decision-making throughout the organization, including an Executive Leadership Team of four. With this stable foundation, I was able to begin to release my role as long-term President and CEO and work alongside Chief Program Officer, Sara Moncada, in partnership and preparation for her new role as CEO in 2021. I am grateful for her abilities and stepping into this new role. I'm especially appreciative of the respectful and honorable way we have all gone through this leadership transition as we danced into new roles and phases of our work as an organic evolution of our organization.

You will read about all of the extraordinary work we accomplished in 2020 through adaptive work, struggle and kindness, and unabashed generosity. We are deeply humbled and grateful to you, the many hands that contribute to the success of our organization in a time of great danger and upheaval. Our circle of kin keeps us strong and agile, and we thank you, our beloved elders, teachers, farmers, seed keepers, funders, coaches, administrators, youth, allies, and all who honored us with your vulnerable requests and bold offerings. Thank you for a transformative year. May we continue to grow in joyful reciprocity!

– Melissa K. Nelson, President/CEO, 1993 – 2020



# YEAR AT A GLANCE

## IGNITED THE VISION OF HERON SHADOW

- ▶ Launched foundational infrastructure, water system, and safety projects
- ▶ Launched land stewardship through tending existing orchard, native plant restoration, and first cultural burn
- ▶ Launched farm master planning and design map, began raised garden beds, and tended soil health



Photo by Melissa Nelson

## SUPPORTED NATIVE FOOD JUSTICE & COMMUNITY FOOD DISTRIBUTION

- ▶ Distributed 5,141+ pounds of fresh, organic, and traditional foods
- ▶ Expanded food donation networks with local farms
- ▶ Donated 65 seed packets, 40 plant starts for home and community food gardens



## GREW NATIVE-TO-NATIVE RECIPROCITY THROUGH OUR MINO-NIIBI FUND

- ▶ Awarded 21 grants to Indigenous communities in 9 countries
- ▶ Supported community health/ COVID services and projects protecting lands, waters, languages, and foods



## STRENGTHENED NETWORKS OF RESILIENCE

- ▶ Expanded existing partnerships: American Indian Child Resource Center, Sogorea Te' Land Trust, California Indian Museum & Cultural Center, Green Gulch Farm, College of Marin
- ▶ Welcomed new partners: Shao Shan Farm, Occidental Arts & Ecology Center Gardens

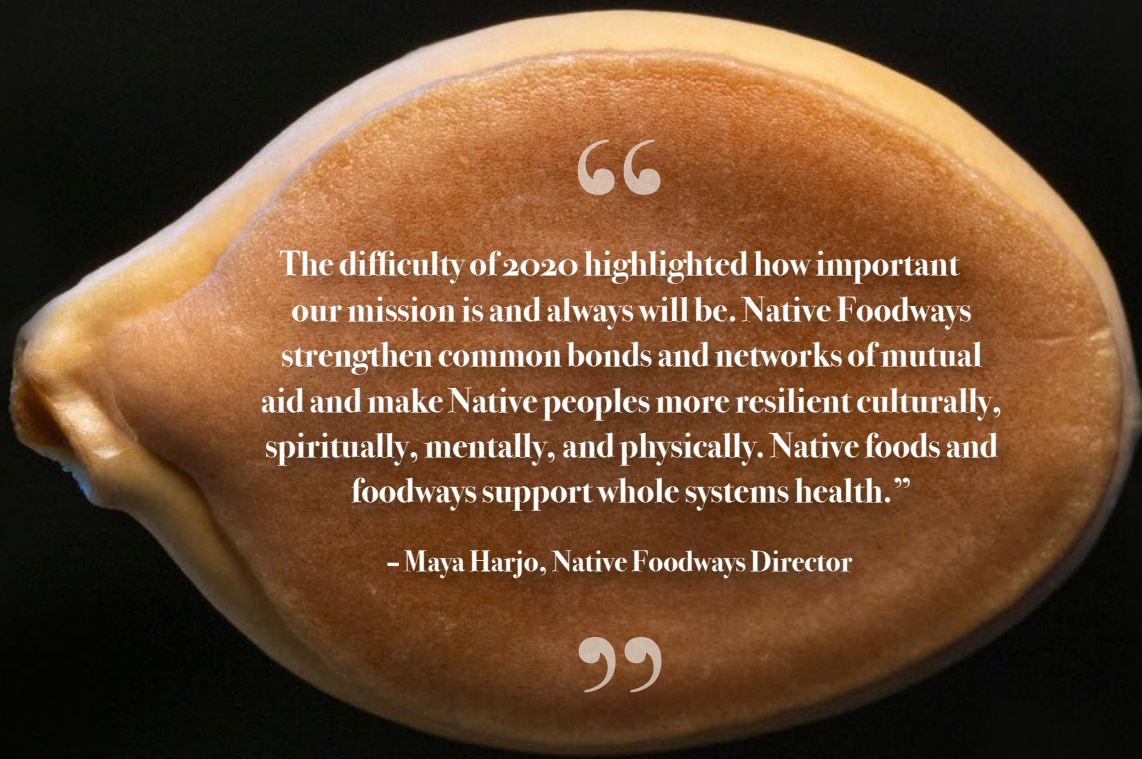


## CONNECTED & SHARED KNOWLEDGE THROUGH NATIVE MEDIA

- ▶ Produced 5 new episodes of The Native Seed Pod podcast
- ▶ TCC featured in KCET Emmy nominated "Tending Nature" series and Intertribal Agricultural Council's Celebrating Native Foods series
- ▶ TCC featured in 3 new articles including cover photo/article of Cultural Survival Quarterly (Sept 2020)

# 2020





“  
The difficulty of 2020 highlighted how important our mission is and always will be. Native Foodways strengthen common bonds and networks of mutual aid and make Native peoples more resilient culturally, spiritually, mentally, and physically. Native foods and foodways support whole systems health.”

- Maya Harjo, Native Foodways Director

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## NATIVE FOODWAYS + LAND STEWARDSHIP

A vision of Indigenous health and wellness that extends from seed to plate, soil to sky, song to recipe, and ancestors to future generations.

Through pandemic lockdowns, fire evacuations, smoke-filled fields and plenty of uncertainty we kept working. When bringing volunteers and interns onto the land was no longer an option, we shifted to a safe all-hands-on-deck effort with our incredible team. We all participated in tending the fields, harvesting food, connecting to new farm partners whose own distribution networks were changing, and driving fresh food to our community partners for regional distribution. Meetings were moved to the land and turned into strategy sessions in the field. While COO Anthony and Chief Development Officer Cyndi weeded, tended and harvested, they also reviewed financials and fundraising strategies for 2021. The challenges of the year gave us an opportunity to refine, plan and thoughtfully grow in new ways with new focus.

### LISTENING, PLANTING, TENDING, GROWING, HARVESTING, AND SHARING

- ▶ Promoting the health of Bay Area Native individuals, families, and communities in time of intense food insecurity
- ▶ 250% increase in amount of fresh, healthy foods distributed to community
- ▶ Doubled our food sourcing network, increasing food donations to community served

### ADVANCING LOCAL FOOD JUSTICE & RESILIENCY OF OUR NATIVE FOODWAYS

- ▶ Strengthened regional and national collaborations in food distribution, seed saving, and foodways educational resources
- ▶ Deepened and expanded our local farm networks and partnerships, making sure plant starts got planted, fields were tended, and food was harvested and shared instead of left in the fields as local farms faced challenges together
- ▶ Grew over a dozen varieties of heirloom seeds for our expanding Native Seed Library

# HERON SHADOW

## An Indigenous Biocultural Heritage Oasis

In 2019, The Cultural Conservancy became a land-based organization, purchasing 7.6 acres of land in Sonoma County, California, on the ancestral lands of the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo Peoples including the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. Heron Shadow is a place for the dreaming and expansion of our mission and vision. These ancestral lands represent the opportunity to provide a Native place of refuge and learning, community engagement, connection to the land, ecological restoration, growing Indigenous foods, and nourishing Indigenous and intercultural relations.

**“Our work is about the relationship between ancestral people and land. Recognizing that we are part of the ecosystem, part of the completeness of the circle. Not above it, or outside of it... but echoing within it.”**

**- Sara Moncada, Chief Program Officer**



### FROM SOIL TO SKY, MENDING THE CIRCLE

In 2020, when we could not gather indoors, we moved to the safety and sanctuary of the land and began to tend with our minds, hearts, spirits, and hands. In addition to launching our Farm Master Plan we also focused on vital infrastructure and clearing the land.

### GOOD, CLEAN WATER

- ▶ Upgraded primary well, installed new pump, pumphouse, and 3 new large capacity water storage tanks
- ▶ Installed new water filtration system for farm and house



### LAND STEWARDSHIP + FARM PREPERATION

- ▶ Tended existing apple orchard and blackberry patches, opened to community for self-harvest and included in community food donations
- ▶ Completed land clearing and first cultural burn for soil health and fire mitigation
- ▶ Removed Monterey pines and milled and reused the wood on site

### FIRE SAFETY + EMERGENCY PREPARATION

- ▶ Completed fire mitigation efforts including defensible space planning
- ▶ Established emergency fire safety and evacuation protocols and procedures
- ▶ Instituted emergency equipment: generators, outdoor air quality readers, fire hoses and hook-ups, pumps, and portable power chargers

### BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS + INFRASTRUCTURE

- ▶ Installed new roof, mold abatement, and structural safety updates on farmhouse
- ▶ Completed electrical safety for barn, farmhouse and storage
- ▶ Replaced damaged windows





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**Heron Shadow was our heartbeat and sanctuary. We needed the land  
as much as the land needed us to tend and protect it.**

**- Arlene Kato, Senior Executive Manager**

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## PEOPLES SERVED



# MINO-NIIBI FUND FOR INDIGENOUS CULTURES

## Investing in Indigenous Communities

As a Native-led organization, a deep tenant of our work is the capacity to reflect and embody reciprocity. We do so through TCC's Mino-Niibi Fund and the Te Ha Alliance partner network. Providing small grants through re-granting to Indigenous-led organizations in the Americas and the Pacific working to revitalize their own cultures, traditions, lands and livelihoods, the Mino-Niibi Fund supports work that documents and protects Indigenous knowledge, revitalizes threatened languages, protects Native foodways and seed sovereignty, conducts youth-elder cultural exchanges, and empowers the circles of Indigenous women. The pandemic brought a wide range of incredible challenges to Native communities around the globe. To recognize the power of multi-year grants and long-term partnerships, we worked with existing partners to extend our adaptable support with a focus on community health and wellness during COVID.

### HONORING COMMUNITY NEEDS DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

- ▶ Released grant restrictions enabling grantee partners to better serve their communities
- ▶ Awarded 21 grants to Native-led groups in 9 countries across the Americas and Pacific
- ▶ Hosted international virtual meetings with Te Ha Alliance grantee partners to connect and share on community needs, challenges, learning and responses during pandemic



# OUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

## UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

Prior to 2019 TCC had operated for 34 years with a small, committed staff squeezing every ounce of programmatic efficacy out of a relatively modest budget. With the 2019 completion of our five-year strategic plan and the offer of land came unparalleled fundraising success and unprecedented organizational growth. Fueled by \$2.3M in multi-year grants, we embodied our mission in a new way through acquiring land and entering into direct land stewardship. With this additional responsibility came the recognition that sustainability could only be achieved by building our fundraising and operational capacity.

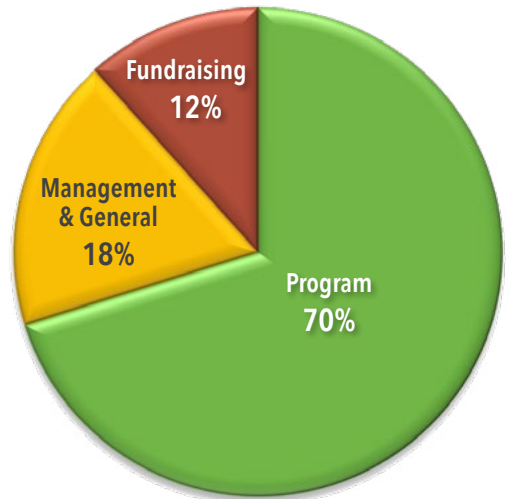
During this extraordinary season of growth, The Cultural Conservancy more than doubled (58%) its traditional budget to meet the new strategic plan by:

- ▶ Building a sustainable team of core full-time senior staff (adding a COO, Chief Programs Officer, and Chief Development Officer)
- ▶ Increasing the number of program staff (adding 3 farm-based staff)
- ▶ Inaugurating a competitive benefits and compensation program

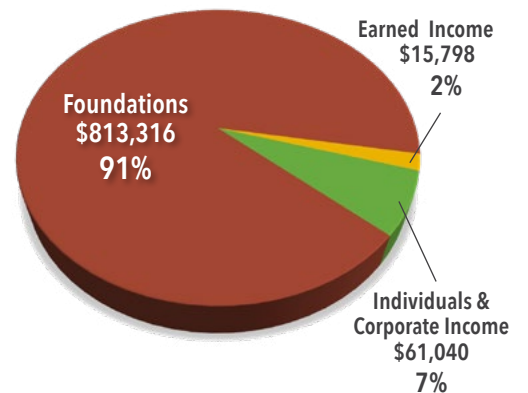
## EXEMPLARY FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The total assets The Cultural Conservancy has been entrusted to manage has more than tripled (244%) since 2018. However, throughout this period of tremendous growth and change, we remain committed to our principles of sound fiscal management, efficiency, and transparency. Our audits and financial reviews have been exemplary.

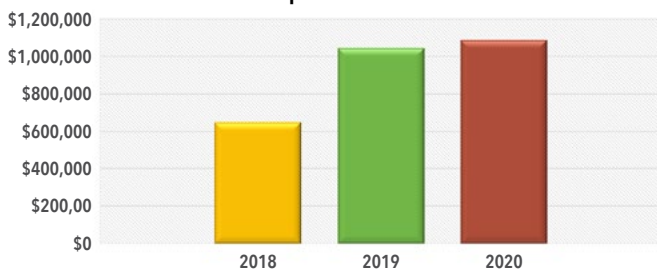
Program Efficiency 2020



Income Sources 2020



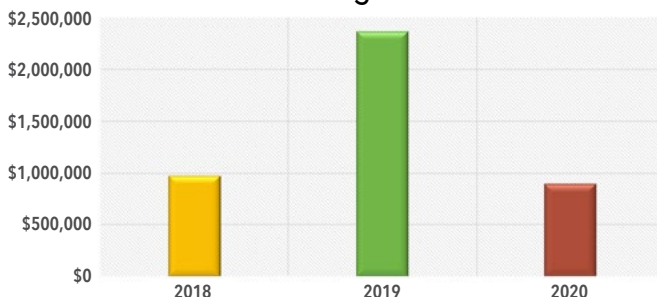
Annual Expenditure Growth



Asset Growth

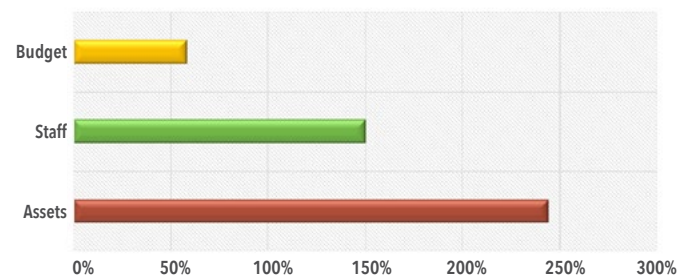


Fundraising Success



2019 fundraising boost due to TCC Land Acquisition Campaign to purchase 7.6 acres of land.

Unprecedented, Sustainable Growth





# OUR CIRCLE OF KIN

## 2020 STAFF

**Melissa K. Nelson** (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)  
- President & CEO

**Sara Moncada** (Yaqui)  
- Chief Program Officer

**Anthony Reese** (African American)  
- Chief Operating Officer

**Cynthia J. Frank** (Kiowa)  
- Chief Development Officer

**Arlene Kato** (Japanese American)  
- Senior Executive Manager

**Mateo Hinojosa** (Mestizo Quechua Bolivian-American) - Media Director

**Maya Harjo** (Quapaw, Shawnee, Muscogee Creek, Seminole, Jewish) - Foodways Director

**Ben Shleffar** (Blackfeet)  
- Native Foodways Farmer

**Nicola Wagenberg** (Colombian/Jewish)  
- Senior Program Associate

## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kaimana Barcarse** (Kanaka Hawai'i), M.A., Chair

**Priscilla Settee** (Cree), Ph.D., Co-Chair

**Kimla McDonald**, M.A., Secretary

**Stefano Varese**, Ph.D., Treasurer

**Lois Ellen Frank** (Kiowa), Ph.D.

**Debra Harry** (Pyramid Lake Paiute), Ph.D.

**Melissa K. Nelson** (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), Ph.D.

## 2020 FUNDERS

**Annenberg Foundation** (Metabolic Studio)

**Bancroft Foundation**

**Ceres Trust**

**Cold Mountain Fund**

**Jesse Smith Noyes Foundation**

**Kalliopeia Foundation**

**NDN Collective**

**NoVo Foundation**

**Panta Rhea Foundation**

**Pawanka Fund**

**Swift Foundation**

**Tamalpais Trust**

**The Christensen Fund**

## CORE VALUES

- ▶ Respect for the gift of life, Indigenous rights and culture, and environmental health
- ▶ Honor Indigenous peoples and communities through respectful collaborations and reciprocal partnerships
- ▶ Support initiatives that allow Native cultures, people and land to thrive (as defined by them)
- ▶ Recognize and Revitalize tribally-specific Traditional Knowledge and Practices, as they outline values of Indigenous well-being through sacred obligations and responsibilities



# GET INVOLVED



## DONATE TODAY

Our work depends on the support of people and organizations like you. Many thanks to all who have generously supported us in protecting and restoring Indigenous Cultures. Give today!  
[www.nativeland.org](http://www.nativeland.org)



## VOLUNTEER

There are many ways to volunteer with us. If interested, please sign up for our Newsletter and contact us at [tcc@nativeland.org](mailto:tcc@nativeland.org). We will be happy to include you in our Volunteer Circle.



## IGNITING INDIGENOUS RESILIENCE - SUPPORT THE HERON SHADOW NATIVE LAND CAMPAIGN

Join us in creating an Indigenous oasis focused on the protection and regeneration of Indigenous agriculture, Native science, and traditional lifeways. Contact our Chief Development Officer Cynthia Frank at [cyndi@nativeland.org](mailto:cyndi@nativeland.org).



## STAY CONNECTED

Join our e-news list to receive the latest news and stories from The Cultural Conservancy  
[www.nativeland.org](http://www.nativeland.org)

Listen to The Native Seed Pod  
[www.nativeseedpod.org](http://www.nativeseedpod.org)

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA







## OUR LAND BASES

The Presidio, San Francisco, California  
*Unceded Ohlone land*

Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden,  
College of Marin, Novato, California  
*Sovereign territory of the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo  
Peoples including the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria*

Heron Shadow, Sebastopol, California  
*Sovereign territory of the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo  
Peoples including the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria*

This is our first, official annual report. We always welcome your comments and questions and would love to hear from you if you would like to work with us. Please reach out!

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All photos by Mateo Hinojosa unless otherwise noted.  
Original heron artwork by Redbird Willie.  
Graphic design by Diane Rigoli.