

# THE POWER OF NATIVE NONPROFITS

A JOINT PUBLICATION BY HOPA MOUNTAIN & THE SEVENTH  
GENERATION FUND FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Seventh Generation Fund  
for Indigenous Peoples, Inc.

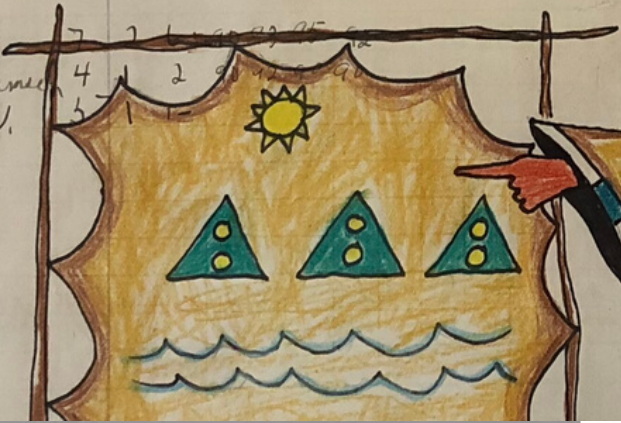


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# The Power of Native Nonprofits

Strengthening the Circle and Building Power, Optimizing Impact  
and their effect in Indian Country.

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*Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.*

*Seek to make your life long and in the service to your people.*

- Tecumseh

**Accountable. Dynamic. Nimble. Resourceful.** Native-created and led nonprofits are a rich source of innovation and provide an empowering matrix for action, skills building, community empowerment, and job development in communities – rural, reservation, and urban settings – throughout Indian Country. They provide in-place asset building and realize social enterprise through their community centered and culturally informed strategies.

Hopa Mountain and Seventh Generation Fund are dedicated to building and supporting the Native nonprofit sector and provide complementary approaches to building and supporting Native nonprofit organizations. Together and as independent nonprofit leading organizations, we believe in the power of the field. We believe in the efficacy and sustainability as a way to identify and nurture leadership and generate trajectories of skills building, shared power and positive action grounded in communities.

This impact report, *Strengthening the Circle - Building Power*, reflects on 12 years of Hopa Mountain's *Strengthening the Circle: Native Nonprofit Leadership Program (2007-2019)*, and six years of Seventh Generation Fund's *Building Power-Optimizing Impact (2013-2019)* programming that provides grant support and direct capacity building to emerging and established Native nonprofits to build the effectiveness and sustainability of Native nonprofits, expand the nonprofit sector, and enhance Seventh Generation Fund's work in this field in the Great Plains region. The purpose of this impact document also is to look forward; build on the achievements and mindful of the challenges, in order to deepen and grow the field of Native created and led nonprofit community based projects.

This work has been deeply supported by the Northwest Area Foundation and other key philanthropic partners such as Kalliopeia Foundation, O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, Oro y Plata Foundation, and First Interstate Bank, among others who share a commitment to this work through supporting Native created and led nonprofits.

Rooted in our organization's collective 60 years of experience of on the ground work directly with Native leaders and initiatives, peer learning, capacity building and community development, that Native nonprofits fulfill a critical role in rebuilding vibrant and prosperous communities. This work often happens in remote and isolated regions, in contexts that are almost always economically disenfranchised and communities with high poverty rates. But these are also arenas where such work is impressively impactful and prolific in vision, human capital, and cultural resources, and potential. Rich in imagination, adaptability, and purpose. Fertile for invention and growth. Dynamic. Self-determinative. Indigenous. Empowered.

Considering these nonprofits are already deeply grounded in their tribal contexts, nurturing strong Native nonprofits maximizes the amount and quality of services to their communities and serve as a proactive model to advancing and sustaining the nonprofit as a community empowerment strategy in Native America. We have witnessed through our respective work how well nonprofit avenues provides meaningful career opportunities in a professional sector that serves community needs that are enriching and fulfilling to nonprofit leadership. Such work demonstrates a core value of our organizations.





*Nonprofit work is not like service-industry work. It's actually a career. That's what you're looking for, especially in Indian and Tribal communities like ours. I'm not looking for a job. I'm looking for a career and you find your career by starting a nonprofit, by doing nonprofit work. There is the power of the program - you're empowering careers.*

Darren Kipp (Blackfeet), Executive Director, Piegan Institute

Our organizations know that such community centered nonprofit organizations effectively address socio-economic needs and help build expertise and skills in reservation and rural settings where there are often few if any such options. This includes improved education, social welfare, health care, local economies, nutrition and other essential services for poverty reduction, and more importantly the holistic sustainability reflected in the overall health and vitality of their communities. The nonprofit sector is a game changer for Indian Country.

Positive change takes time, resources and a long term commitment. Sustainable and meaningful outcomes in such work for a community are often witnessed multi-generationally, and not solely in a one or two, or even a 5 year grant cycle. Mindful of this, Seventh Generation Fund and Hopa Mountain are engaged for the long run. We are committed and focused to help catalyze this change, in full alignment and engagement with the community initiatives involved in our programming.

Each of our organizations are experienced and deeply engaged with place-based, community centered non-profit development and capacity building to support Indigenous leadership and empowerment. We know that by building a community's strengths - traditional, cultural, community assets, our coming generations will have the necessary information, skills and resources they need to do more than survive - to truly grow and flourish. Further, we believe in this strategy such that those resources will be cared for and sustained in a manner that future generations will be able to have financial knowledge and employment to care for their needs and those of their families; energy to heat their homes and cook their food; ample food to nourish their families; strategies for community well-being, and the capacity to continue their distinct cultures and lifeways.

Dynamic and integrated programming that is attentive of the multifaceted needs of Native nonprofits, their leadership, and the on the ground teams implementing the work in real time, as first responders to critical issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, civic engagement, microenterprise development, and financial literacy. Our organizations offer an unmatched combination of experienced project specific, effective, and culturally relevant and respectful methodologies that focus on the assets inherent, and those which can be grown or strengthened, in the communities and emerging nonprofits with which we work.

Respectfully,

Tia Oros Peters (Zuni), MFA  
Seventh Generation Fund  
for Indigenous Peoples

Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, EdD  
Hopa Mountain



# Strengthening the Circle

HOPA MOUNTAIN'S NATIVE NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

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In many Native cultures, the circle is a holistic symbol of the world. A circle encompasses all areas, knowledge, and ways of being. It is fitting that Strengthening the Circle (STC), a Native Nonprofit Leadership Program designed to support Native leaders in the nonprofit sector, uses the circle as both a metaphor and symbol for its work. This report will address the creation and development of this circle over the past decade. It will address how goals and objectives were met and review current impacts on organizations and community and economic development.

After a series of visioning sessions hosted by Native leaders at the Piegan Institute in 2003 and 2004, Strengthening the Circle was launched by Hopa Mountain, the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, the Institute for Conservation Leadership, and WolfStar Productions in 2006. Thirteen years later, it is a proven initiative that has impacted more than 500 Native nonprofit leaders in the Northwest and Great Plains. It is an exciting time and important work as Native nonprofits are emerging as a force for strengthening community self-reliance, education, entrepreneurial approaches, and social services. After training and mentoring participating STC organizations, independent evaluations have shown that almost all these nonprofits have stronger boards and more financial support and programs to serve Native families.

STC is a yearlong training program designed specifically for leaders of Native American nonprofit organizations. This program offers training in organizational development plus the tools, skills, and technical support necessary to successfully develop and strengthen nonprofits working in Indian Country. Hopa Mountain, Seventh Generation Fund, Generations - Indigenous Ways, Artemisia Associates, and WolfStar Productions cooperatively organize the training, mentoring, and support services.

From the start, four program goals were established that remain the same today:

- Build the capacity of Native-led nonprofit organizations' Boards, staff, and early career professionals so that there are more resources, networks, and services for youth and families in tribal communities
- Share knowledge among organizations about traditional ways of leading and governing
- Develop culturally appropriate training materials to build the base of support available to Native nonprofit organizations
- Encourage more private foundations to support this vital work

*1 The Strengthening the Circle logo was created by Blackfeet artist, Anne Grant. Its open design allows for more participants from all four directions. In this way, the circle is welcoming and continues to expand.*



Since its inception the four pillars of the Strengthening the Circle program have remained unchanged:

**Building Capacity**

**Traditional Leadership and Governance**



**Strengthening the Circle**  
*A Native Nonprofit Leadership Program*

**Encouraging Foundation Support**

**Culturally Appropriate Training Materials**

*“Each year at STC, I learn more. If we’re going to make realistic change on reservations, it’s going to come from within. Before we had one program, now we have six. We were small before. It was great at that time to have 20 kids. Now we’re increasing our reach to 500-600. Now we see we can reach up to thousands.” – STC Participant*



From the start, STC was designed as a peer-to-peer model grounded in education, mentoring, and coaching through a four-day annual training program with follow-up training and technical assistance. This program was built on knowledge acquired over thirty years of Native nonprofit support provided by Tia Oros Peters and Chris Peters of Seventh Generation Fund, expertise from Donna Chimera, President of WolfStar Productions and nonprofit training expertise from Barbara Rusmore, originally allied with the Institute for Conservation Leadership and later, Artemisia Associates. Additional program development assistance was provided by Dr. Henrietta Mann (Southern Cheyenne), Darrell Kipp (Blackfeet), Heather Miller (Wyandotte), Rick Robinson (Northern Cheyenne), Terry Profota and Dr. Shelly Valdez (Laguna Pueblo).

In the first year, Native-led nonprofit leaders located in Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Wyoming were invited to apply to the program. They were paired with a partnering organization and attended two, four-day intense training sessions, with follow-up coaching and mentoring between sessions. Foundation leaders (“funders”) were also invited into these training sessions and introduced to Native nonprofits. Relationships formed between the leadership team, the participating Native nonprofit organizations and funders that shaped the program goals and subsequent outcomes. This relational work between Native nonprofit leaders and funders is a hallmark of the STC program today and reflects an important strength of this work over time.

When this program was first envisioned by a group of Native leaders, they knew it was imperative that this program operate in culturally respectful ways. The staff and project partners had to have deep knowledge of Tribal traditions, culture and history. The core project partners determined that they needed support in place to consistently offer and deliver program services over a period of years. It quickly became clear that most of these nonprofit leaders would not have the funds available to attend a week-long training outside of their home communities. In response, funds were raised to offer all STC training and technical assistance opportunities free-of-cost and participating organizations were given a travel stipend in order to help offset their costs to attend.

Identifying Native-led nonprofits in the Northern Rocky Mountain region during the first few years of the STC program involved a significant research effort. Across the states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, or South Dakota, one could easily identify the organizations that were serving urban Native people because of their locations and programs. In reservation communities, it was more challenging initially to identify emerging and existing Native-led nonprofits.

Due to trends in philanthropy in 2003-2007, the STC leadership team knew that many reservation communities had Boys and Girls Clubs. The Boys and Girls Club of America had made a strong push in the 1990s to help launch Clubs on reservations across the region. Hopa Mountain program staff began by contacting these Clubs and asking if they knew of other Native-led nonprofits offering programs to youth in the community or providing services outside of the Tribal government system. Staff also made frequent trips to reservation communities to talk with people and connect with Native nonprofit leaders in the community.



# Building Capacity of Native Nonprofits

Once organizations were identified, Native nonprofit staff or Board members were interviewed and asked about their mission, budget, and opportunities and challenges to their operations. The interviewers took time to learn about each organization and leader. Hopa Mountain staff then wrote brief notes about each group in order to help all STC partners better understand these organizations. Executive directors also received an Organizational Self-Assessment Survey to complete to learn more about the organizational resources they had in place – and would like to have. Based on the information they provided, subsequent training sessions were organized on topics ranging from working with foundations to Board and staff development, to culturally responsive youth program designs. This type of reflective program model continues today.

At the heart of Strengthening the Circle is a four-day gathering that focuses on peer-to-peer training and mentoring among Native nonprofit leaders, Board members, funders, and project partners. In 2007–2010, as many Native nonprofit organizations were forming on reservations, STC training focused on the fundamentals of effective nonprofits: Board development, staff management and professional development, fiscal planning and accounting, launching publicity campaigns, implementing programs, program evaluation, and alliance building with other strategic educational, economic, social service, and cultural resources.

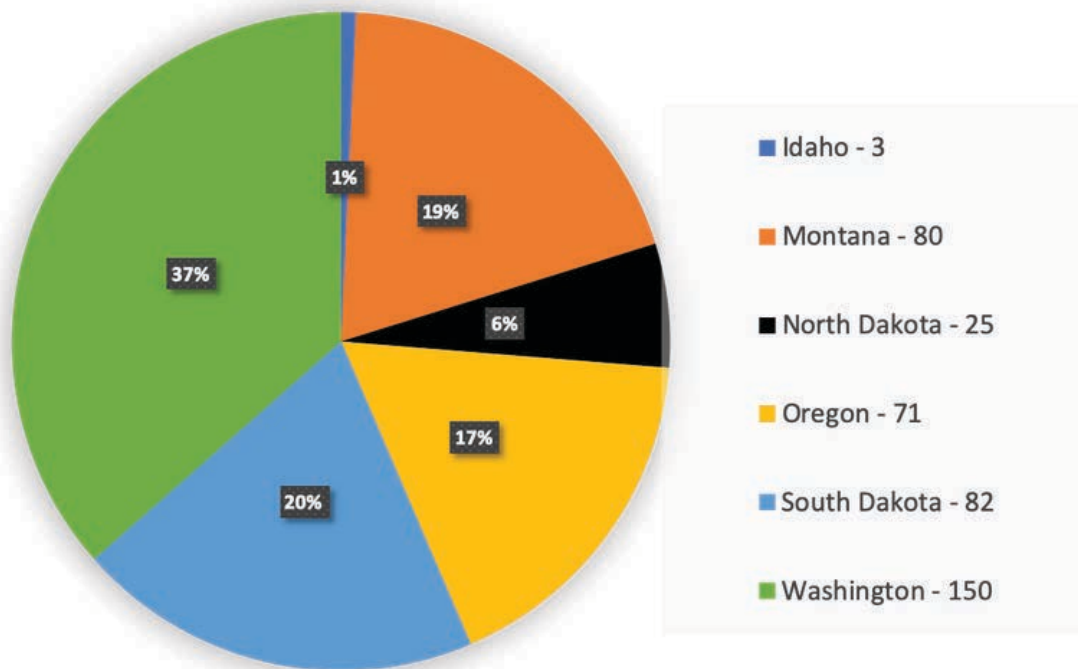
The four-day workshop has continued to be refined through the years; however, the core elements remain the same. The gathering incorporates key staff and Board leaders to support the transfer of capacity-building strategies to the entire organization, helping to ensure that capacity training “sticks” with the agency and ultimately benefits the community they serve. The participants complete an assessment of their capacity and develop a plan to strengthen their leadership and organizational effectiveness. In total, they receive twelve months of mentoring, consulting, and peer support follow through one-on-one calls, conference calls, and direct consulting services that are provided by STC experienced partners and consultants. These relationships strengthen recipient agencies and support their learning and strategic action plans, ensuring that the growth begun during the four-day workshop will continue and expand throughout the year.

Each leader of a participating Native nonprofit organization receives a program manual with the materials, worksheets, and bibliographies from the STC workshops, along with a thumb drive full of additional relevant nonprofit materials. On-going support after the gathering connects all the participating organizations in a network via a listserve, site visits, and peer-to-peer contacts that share grant announcements, opportunities for additional training, answers to commonly asked questions, ongoing dialogue about timely events, and initiatives for tribal youth. Onsite technical assistance by STC partners supports the goals set by Native non-profit organizations during assessment and training. This includes capacity building to effectively organize and run an organization, develop a strategic plan, manage accounting, create successful grant proposals, and support Board and staff. Technical assistance over the years has included work to update strategic plans, implement community surveys, or create policy manuals.

Some STC gatherings are held in urban areas; others within a Native Nation. In 2007, for example, the first training was held in Bozeman, Montana and the second four-day training was held on the Rocky Boy Reservation. In 2008, the first training was held in Bozeman and the second training was held on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Leaders from within these communities were invited to participate and share their stories with the larger group. Holding the sessions in reservation communities helps participants learn more about the diversity of Native-led grassroots and how they function on a day-to-day basis.

As the program has matured and participation expanded to serve Native nonprofits across seven states in the Northern Rockies and Plains (including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota), a Strengthening the Circle fall gathering was organized in South Dakota to serve nonprofits located there and in North Dakota beginning in the fall of 2014. This portion of the program continues today.

### Estimated Number of Native Led Nonprofits by State - 2019



Based on requests from Native nonprofit leaders, Donna Chimera of WolfStar Productions has worked with organizational leaders to create logos, brochures and websites. Seventh Generation Fund staff have taught fundraising workshops and offered fiscal sponsorship services to emerging organizations. Barbara Rusmore with Artemisia Associates has coached experienced leaders through organizational changes. Hopa Mountain staff have traveled to reservation communities to teach Board development, grant writing and lead strategic planning sessions. Additional consultants have been hired to help develop financial plans and work with participating organizations to find supplemental funding to keep their programs running. Hopa Mountain staff also edited grant proposals and assisted with summer youth programs. In most years of the program, participating organizations have had the option of applying for a small grant up to \$750 to develop and/or update their strategic plans, invest in a program, or create a policy manual.





# KNOWLEDGE SHARING

## TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

There is no consensus among Native nonprofit leaders as to what constitutes “traditional leadership or governance styles”. As one participant said though, “we use traditional leadership ways though every day and we ‘just know’”.

Running a nonprofit organization requires knowledge on the rules and regulations that specify how an organization must be set up, governed and operate. While these federal guidelines influence structure, Native-led nonprofits more commonly incorporate longer Board terms and consensus-based models of governance to increase their effectiveness in Indian Country. Relational fundraising approaches and longer planning timelines demonstrate how traditional ways of governing and working furthermore reinforce and expand upon currently documented “best practices” for nonprofit organizations.

At a STC gathering, a member of the leadership team or an invited participant often opens the session with prayer. Native participants know a deep understanding of traditions and cultures are recognized at STC. For non-Native participants, including partners and funders, this has been, and continues to be part of the educational experience and allyship process.

Traditional ways of leading and governing carry over into Native nonprofit work daily. As such, ways of working in a Native-led nonprofit can be different than working in a non-Native nonprofit. An emphasis on relationships, sovereignty, self-determination, respecting elders, recognizing the Native land that we stand on, offering prayer, stories, song, governing by consensus, and upholding cultural values for men’s and women’s roles ground Native nonprofits in their place.

To reflect and respect the differences rooted in sovereignty, Seventh Generation Fund staff have offered many workshop sessions over the years that explore how Native leadership differs and what it means to be a leader in Indian country. A nonprofit structure is a foreign concept to many of those living on reservations so gaining an understanding of how to incorporate culture and traditions into this framework has been important to the success and development of these organizations.

Cultural teachings have been reinforced by session leaders, such as Dr. Michael Yellowbird (Sahnish), North Dakota State University Professor of Sociology who presented his work over a period of years on Neurodecolonization: Using Mindfulness, Cultural Neuroscience Research, and Traditional Indigenous Practices, Ceremonies, and Systems of Belief to heal the Damage of Colonialism. Dr. Craig Howe (Oglala Lakota) has offered sessions on Lakota Societies as Models for Nonprofit Governance.

Another important aspect of STC is the role of storytelling, hearing first hand narratives or sharing experiences. Through this method, participants learn valuable lessons in running their organizations. Knowledge is passed on in ways that once again respect cultures and traditions.

# Culturally Appropriate Training Materials

Over time, the project partners have developed a series of materials, ranging from white papers, to resource lists, to articles that reflect the values and focus areas of Native nonprofit organizations. These materials have been designed to more accurately reflect the missions, visions, goals and issues of Native-led nonprofits in Indian Country. Native leaders' knowledge about traditional ways of leading, educating, governing, and developing assets were the framework for the provided material.

STC has also made meeting with participants and organizations throughout the year a priority. Smaller workshops are now organized that focus on organizations with similar missions or scaled programs. For example, in May of 2016, Piegan Institute's Cutswood School in Browning, Montana hosted an Indigenous Language Summit-Expanding our Circle. This Language Summit provided an opportunity to meet with leaders from other language immersion schools throughout the Northern Rockies and Great Plains to share promising practices for language revitalization. During this Summit, cultural and traditional knowledge and language curriculum resources were shared. A similar language summit was hosted by the Salish School of Spokane in 2018.







## ENCOURAGING FOUNDATION INVESTMENT

Historically the Federal government has been the primary provider of financial resources to reservation communities and Urban Indian projects by providing grant funds to support various kinds of tribal programs and services on the reservation. Most of these projects are run by Tribal governments without much support from private funding sources.

Native nonprofits in the Northwest experience many issues accessing private funding. A lack of knowledge from both Native nonprofits and private funders lead to these problems and a lack of funding within Indian Country. Over the past few decades, Native-led funding organizations like Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, First Nations Development Institute and the Potlatch Fund have made significant strides by educating Native nonprofits and private foundations and building partnerships to support private philanthropy.

Strengthening the Circle partners invite representatives from private foundations to participate in the gathering in order to meet Native nonprofit leaders that may be a match for their foundation's funding interests. "Funders" build relationships with Native leaders, learn about what is happening in reservation communities and make important connections. Through interviews conducted with foundation leaders in 2016-2017, many remarked that their time with Native leaders have been "inspirational", "humbling", and "transformative". Many Native nonprofit leaders have said that without this connection to funders that they would not have grown their budgets or increased their services to the community. "Now I understand that having a personal relationship helps funders know how genuine the people are at the organization," one said. "We have expanded our fundraising strategies and have more than doubled our donor base," mentioned another. It is just one more piece of the circle that helps Native nonprofits grow their capacity to carry out their missions.





## **THE GROWTH OF NATIVE NONPROFITS**

Research indicates that 83% of Native nonprofits were organized after 1970 and 90% exempt organizations after 1977. Data collected by Hopa Mountain shows that most Native nonprofit organizations in the Northwest were organized after 2000.

### **2007 STC class**

19 organizations - 6 with FT employees - 5 of these organizations were Boys & Girls Clubs - three of which have now closed. The strength of the nonprofit sector was the Tribal Colleges.

### **2019 class**

75 organizations - 30 with FT employees - only one is a Boys & Girls Club. Fifteen of the participating organizations are more than a decade old.

Approximate number of Native-led organizations by state in 2019: Idaho: 3; Montana: 80; South Dakota: 82; North Dakota: 25; Washington: 150; Oregon: 71.

### **One Measure of Economic Impact - Increased Organizational Expenditures**

There are many ways to measure the economic impacts of Native-led nonprofit organizations in the Northwest over the last decade, although no one measurement is definite since nonprofit organizations are service oriented rather than profit centered.

#### **2006 STC class(71 Organizations)**

Total Expenditures: \$42,441,504.33

Average Budget Size: \$597,767.67

#### **2013 STC class (85 Organizations)**

Total Expenditures:\$58,708,869.72

Average Budget Size: \$690,692.58

**Thus, while the average Northwest Native nonprofit organizations' expenditures have remained fairly constant over time accounting for inflation, the number of organizations is increasing in this region as is the total amount of funds available to them.**



# Increasing Native Nonprofit-led Community Resources

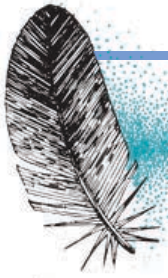
**The biggest outcomes of the STC program have been an increase in Native led nonprofit organizations serving Native Americans, an increase in funding to Indian Country and an increase in Native nonprofit capacity.** Using data collected from Guidestar and through a series of interviews conducted by Heather Miller (Wyandotte), Marissa Spang (Northern Cheyenne/Crow), Dani Morrison (Oglala Lakota), and Lisa Perry (Eastern Shoshone), Hopa Mountain has found positive trends in all these areas.

In the evaluation summaries, Native nonprofit leaders consistently spoke about the emphasis they felt Native nonprofits placed on community relationships. Some added that they appreciated the flexibility inherent in this work. When STC participants were prompted to cite the largest challenges of working with Native nonprofits, they mentioned physical and emotional stress. Almost all respondents expressed a deep valuing of the opportunity to exchange best practices with one another and to share knowledge. Through networking and sharing, Native leaders and funders are working together to increase the resources and networks available to Native nonprofit leaders, ultimately helping them to build a stronger foundation for their organizations.

As Tribal communities and Native leaders gain a better understanding of nonprofit organizations, a diverse array of Native-designed, Native-led nonprofits have emerged and now we find Tribal Colleges, Community Development Corporations, language-immersion schools, culturally-grounded youth programs, and advocacy organizations all working in Tribal communities. These Native nonprofits are embracing their cultural traditions and many organizations have decided to name their organizations using words within their own Native languages.

When organizations talk about the changes they have experienced over the last decade, most of them share that now they have multiple full-time staff and provide programs and services year-round. These organizations are now creating tiered staffing positions that require highly skilled professionals and offer career positions to grow into and build upon. STC organizations are increasing the size of their budgets because they are more deeply engaged with regional funders and receive more financial support.





# BUILDING POWER, OPTIMIZING IMPACT INITIATIVE

## A NORTHERN PLAINS GRANTMAKING, TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As a values-driven organization that responds to community needs and strategies, the Seventh Generation Fund designs programs and supports Native-led projects that are forward thinking and innovative initiatives for the most sustainable and positive impact. In many instances we co-create program trajectories and methodologies in alignment with the community leaders and projects we work with. As our purpose mandates we remain focused on building multi-generational leadership for long-term strategies for the wellbeing and empowerment of our future generations.

Seventh Generation Fund's Building Power – Optimizing Impact (BPOI) Initiative began as a pilot in 2013, through a partnership with the Northwest Area Foundation. It serves Great Plains Indigenous community empowerment led by Native Peoples such as but not limited to, the Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Shoshone, Chippewa, Cree, Crow, Salish, and Lakota. The purpose of Building Power – Optimizing Impact is to grow and support Native-led and controlled nonprofits on or near the 23 reservations in the four state region of Montana, Idaho, North Dakota, and South Dakota. This is accomplished through direct grants, training and technical assistance, and peer convening, in an integrated approach.

It has been our experience that Native nonprofits fulfill a critical role in rebuilding vital and prosperous communities. Building strong Native nonprofits maximizes the amount and quality of services to their communities and serve as a proactive model to advancing and sustaining the nonprofit as a community empowerment strategy in Native America, as well as provide career opportunities in a professional sector that serves community needs. Such work demonstrates a core value of our organization. Since these Native organizations grew from the community itself, these nonprofits have special vantage points and offer the best and most sustainable responses in relation to the community they serve and the people who lead and staff them.

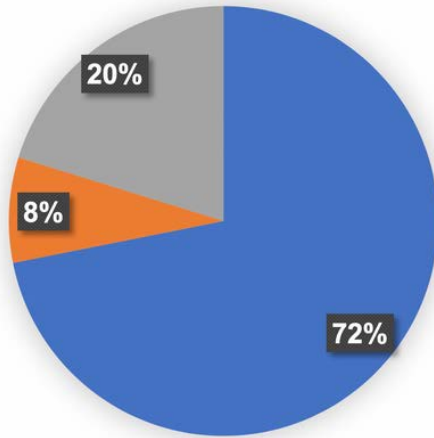
Seventh Generation Fund's focus and methodology demonstrates the commitment to Native Peoples, communities and tribal nations as the transformative agents of their own communities. SGF supports culturally anchored community generated systems for meaningful change. This is actualized in our Building Power Program through grantmaking, project capacity building, and peer centered convening. This integrated methodology experienced significant positive outcomes that continue to ripple and replicate in the Native communities served by BPOI.





# GRANTMAKING

## Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative Grantmaking 2014-2019



### Grant Types

- General Support - \$888,758.47
- Professional Development - \$97,826.08
- Operating Reserve - \$250,000

### Grant Totals

- \$1,236,620.55 Awarded
- 153 Individual Grants
- 31 Native Nonprofit Organizations

Immediate outcomes witnessed in the first few years were significantly meaningful in that the infusion of financial resources led to the supported Native nonprofits to be better equipped to continue providing effective services to their communities. Professional development was enhanced and learning opportunities for social enterprise was developed and projects' access and use of professional services and skills contributed to the sustainability of all grantee organizations. The regional nonprofit network continues to grow and build strength both as individual projects and as a field.

Long Term Outcomes included that participating nonprofit organizations' leaders and staff have an increased their knowledge, skillset and experience to more effectively advance their organization's work. These organizations also achieved higher levels of financial security and were better able to participate in meaningful dialogues and decision making on matters pertaining to asset building, social enterprise, and culturally relevant prosperity. The grants have also offered these groups organizational sustainability which contributes to building the nonprofit field and provides a model for other emerging Native nonprofit groups. SGF notes that the Nonprofit peer, intermediary and nonprofit networks expanded, such as through our partnerships at Strengthening the Circle.



## TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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Through this component SGF provides direct, project-specific and field support for building the Native nonprofit arena and its efficacy in the served region. During 2013-2019, we increased basic organizational management skills of leadership and personnel to more effectively administer and advance their project work. We recognize that improved management skills can be applied widely in Indian Country to build assets, including to social enterprise and Native business development on reservations.



The Seventh Generation Fund provided all supported organizations under BPOI with project-specific and customized training and technical assistance to the participating Native grantees to strengthen their organizations' ability to better manage and sustain their nonprofit and social enterprise work. Training and technical assistance activities included board strategic planning sessions, proposal review help, digital media assistance, logo and letterhead design, and nonprofit incorporation and IRS filing help.

Under the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative, the Seventh Generation Fund has served ten organizations through the Affiliate Program, which includes regular ongoing technical assistance, and has helped three grantee organizations secure independent 501(c)(3) status.

## CONVENING

Developing and implementing specialized convenings that provide the opportunity for focused peer learning, networking and training and technical support for grantees to share strategies, develop linkages, and explore common work for nonprofit and social enterprise development. Such convenings provide for participating project's to reflect and review their work and engage, learn and grow with like-minded nonprofit partners.

Outcomes helped build the field and strengthen skills and knowledge. Participating organizations reduced their isolation and now have more professional and organizational linkages and connections to advance their strategies for culturally informed asset building and nonprofit development. Through increased networking and peer learning, participating grantees have improved capacity to envision and create reservation based social enterprises, advance their program work, and broaden their impacts.

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Over the past six years, Building Power, Optimizing Impact Grantees have been invited to a series of capacity building, training and networking events as peer convenings. These have increased the technical capacity of grantees and also helped strengthen the bonds between regional networks. Events include Keeping the Homefires Burning in 2015 Coeur d'Alene, Idaho focusing on Building Native Assets, in 2017 Yavapai Homelands, Arizona and in 2019 in Sumeg, California. The Seventh Generation Fund's biannual gatherings of grantee partners at the annual Strengthening the Circle: Native Nonprofit leadership program trainings, ongoing Affiliate Trainings, and special Building Power Grantee Gatherings have been significant arenas for convening and power building of participating nonprofits.

## Indigenous Impact Multiplier and Native Centered Evaluation

Our partnership with the Northwest Area Foundation and other philanthropic leaders supported Seventh Generation Fund in our work to develop a tool conceived through a conversation with community-based Native grantees during a Building Power grantee convening in 2016. Our Native Centered Evaluation methodology, Rivers to Re-Indigenization, is now becoming a core component of our program work and engagement.

Experience has shown us that measuring the total number of people impacted by a Native community-generated project can be challenging to quantify, considering the close-knit nature of Native families and communities means that impact is amplified much more than similar efforts in non-Native communities. Large families and extended kinship systems means that positive change (cultural, economic, spiritual, etc.) in each individual ends up having a ripple effect, directly influencing large sections of the community. Multiplied over years of sustained operations, Native community-based organizations individually and collectively have far-reaching, positive impacts in their communities – impacts that continue to ripple out for generations.

As a way to more accurately encapsulate and measure the number of people impacted in Native communities, we have created an Indigenous Impact Multiplier. In this conversation, when asked to give a number, an estimate of how many immediate family members would be affected by an individual project participant – every single grantee gave the number “10.” This consensus-based, collective conversation is what led to establishing our Indigenous Impact Multiplier: that a calculation estimating that an average minimum number of total individuals impacted is ten times more than the reported participants in Native community-generated projects.

The number calculated serves as a minimum baseline measurement representing the first set of concentric social circles that are being impacted by the individual's participation in the project. These figures are both realistic and conservative.





# LEVERAGED FUNDS

## GRANTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS



As a brief snapshot, during the 2015–2016 Grant Year, four Building Power Grantees, Wild Horse Butte, Generations – Indigenous Ways, Piegan Institute and The Center Pole leveraged a total of \$1,900,000 in additional funds. These contributions represent a combination of individual donations, foundation grants and state and federal funding.

Especially in the case of federal funding, unrestricted general support funds through the Building Power program allowed organizations to manage administration for narrowly funded programs that do not include any budgetary allowance for general expenses. As an example, in 2014 and 2015 Wild Horse Butte Community Development Corporation planned and oversaw the construction of the Lacreek District Clinic in Martin, SD. Construction costs were covered through large federal grants, but operating costs for staff and office facilities needed to administer the grant were not. The \$10,000 provided by Building Power, Optimizing Impact funds during that time allowed Wild Horse Butte the critical support and flexibility to successfully build the clinic.

Since 2014, Seventh Generation Fund Affiliates served by the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative have leveraged a total of \$463,000 in grant funding from donors in the four-state region of North Dakota, South Dakota, Idaho and Montana. Additionally, the Seventh Generation Fund has secured \$239,000 in funding to support projects in the same region.

# Affiliate Program



Seventh Generation Fund's Affiliate Program helped inspire the conceptual and programmatic frame for both Strengthening the Circle and the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative. The Affiliate program provides a suite of services including fiscal sponsorship, financial oversight and program management, organizing and planning support, fund development, and technical assistance to Native created and led community based projects without tax exempt status nor the infrastructure to fully realize their organizational goals without such support. Seventh Generation Fund is uniquely situated in the philanthropic and community organization-building landscapes and supports more than 30 such Affiliates throughout the Indigenous world.

One example of a new Affiliate Project of the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples is the Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI), founded in 2019 as an organization dedicated to community-based research on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous Peoples. The Sovereign Bodies Institute is a center for generating new knowledge and understandings of how Indigenous nations and communities are impacted by gender and sexual violence, and how they may continue to work towards healing and freedom from such violence. They serve as a home to the first community generated and maintained missing and murdered Indigenous women database that spans colonial borders across the Americas.

Based out of Wiyot Territory, Northern California and led by a Cheyenne Executive Director, SBI's MMIW Database project, community partnerships and research projects have numerous deep connections to the Northern Plains region. This includes projects throughout Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, and supporting and building the capacity of independent researchers working within their homes in Blackfoot and Lakota communities.

In their first year of operation, they have presented at Strengthening the Circle, have given eight awards to promising Indigenous emerging scholars, and leveraged over \$200,000 in funding.

There is an integral synergy between the Affiliate Program, the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative (BPOI) and Strengthening the Circle. For example, Helene Gaddie, Director of Generations - Indigenous Ways, has been one of the pillars of BPOI since its inception, which has also led to an increased role within the Strengthening the Circle planning and implementation team. A core organizer for the South Dakota component of Strengthening the Circle for the past two years, Helene is a dynamic leader. She has been an invaluable part of the visioning and implementation team and has provided a necessary cultural grounding for the Black Hills trainings. Her years of experience as a Seventh Generation Fund Affiliate grantee with the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative, as a Hopa Mountain Fellow, and as a deeply engaged participant at Strengthening the Circle, combined with her enthusiasm and generosity in helping other nonprofit organizations succeed, have prepared Helene extremely well for this role.

These mutually reinforcing structures of technical support, capacity building and sustained funding have equipped reservation-based leaders and changemakers in the Northern Plains Region with the skills, encouragement, connections and funding to make significant impacts in their own communities and in the nonprofit field.





# Program Successes

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## Strengthening the Circle and Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative

The joint successes of both of these programs can best be conceptualized as concentric circles of influence radiating out from central kernels of nonprofit leaders to the entire field of regional growth.

**1) Individual Leadership Growth** - By providing specialized training and advising for executive and board leadership and access to funding to implement organizational goals, most participants have experienced huge personal growth and increased practical management skills.

New leaders are knowledgeable, passionate and dedicated but often lack experience with the nonprofit system. The ability to quickly grow new nonprofits from core groups of motivated community members is a key component of Strengthening the Circle and the Building Power, Optimizing Impact Initiative.

**2) Group and Organizational Development** - The skills and high standards of management cultivated by program participants radiate out to affect the staff, board and volunteers of these organizations and raise expectations of professionalism, ethics and accountability at all levels.

**3) Increased Community Services** - These nonprofits have increased their communities' self-reliance, opportunities and services of all kinds, including food systems, financial services, cultural youth programming and access to quality healthcare. By addressing community issues from a cultural base, these groups have positively impacted their community's well being and supported a resurgence of cultural lifeways.

**4) Building the Field** - Intellectually vibrant and operationally nimble, the network of Native nonprofit leaders that have participated in both programs form a large base of the nonprofit business sector in the Northern Plains region. Collaboration and peer-learning between program participants amplifies the efforts of each organization and adds to a regional knowledge base that can be mobilized and adapted to meet any future needs.



# Recommendations

Based on Hopa Mountain and the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples' experience in supporting Native community-based nonprofit organizations, the following ten points represent best practices for funders interested in directly supporting grassroots work in Native communities.

## Awareness

1. Be aware that Indigenous Peoples have experienced generations of externally-imposed “social development” and charity programs that have resulted in many collective cultural harms. Supporting and working in partnership with Native created and led projects fosters community healing and self-determined growth.
2. Be mindful of Tribal Sovereignty and be aware that each tribal community is unique. Seek to understand Native culture and customs. Be aware that culturally specific communication styles exist in many communities and that cultural barriers may exist around certain topics like requesting funding. Be willing to directly ask “how can we help?” or “what does your organization need most at this time?”
3. Know that supporting Native led nonprofit work helps build skills that create careers, rather than just short-term jobs, in reservation communities.
4. Realize that Native communities are comprised of networks of families and that Native nonprofit leadership often reflect this reality.
5. Know that reclamation of language and culture is often a core component of social and economic development in Native communities. Manifestations of this resurgence are unique between tribes and are especially different from non-Native communities.





## Action

1. Trust that the community knows what is best for its current and future vitality. Be willing to re-imagine what success looks like through an Indigenous lens and community-defined asset-based frameworks, evaluation strategies and methodologies.
2. Seek out existing nonprofit support networks, professional development providers and funders circles. Fund organizations and networks who support the entire field of Native nonprofit growth. Trust Native-led philanthropic organizations and regional partners that are well-regarded by Native Peoples to help bridge communities and the philanthropic sector.
3. Build Relationships with and visit Native communities - meet project leaders where they are to gain better understanding of their unique contexts. Accept invitations for site visits and attend funders tours if offered.
4. Build long-term reciprocal relationships based on respect, honor, trust and humility. Invest for the long-term; be patient and willing to take risks with newly formed or reemerging organizations.
5. Streamline your foundation's grant application processes. Make your funding programs as accessible as possible and take the initiative to engage directly with applicants on the phone or in person.



# About Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Founded in 1977 during a time of tremendous movement for rights and justice in the world, the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples was created by Native chiefs, clan mothers, scholars, youth, activists, and tribal philosophers as a response to the ever-growing needs and to achieve the dreams of their communities for a better world. The organization was inspired from campfire, kitchen table and community dialogue - emerging and grounded in grassroots community members - comprised of dreams, hard work, and inspirational goals set by Native leaders of that time. We have remained grounded in tribal community contexts and committed to supporting grassroots strategies of resilience and capacity building on community centered terms for empowerment and futurity.

Seventh Generation Fund believes that Native Peoples know and understand the issues and problems in their own communities and contexts. With this mind, all of the program development of our organization is founded on this belief and that Native Peoples have the solutions that best remedy and address their concerns. Our granting programs; creating opportunities for Indigenous Peoples' capacity building through peer learning, skills and knowledge base acquisition, and bridging understanding and linkages between the Indigenous world and the philanthropic arena, and civil society, are the major trajectories of our work.

We fulfill all facets of our work and program activities while consistently centering grassroots communities - taking their lead and responsiveness to their trajectories - throughout the Native world. As an Indigenous Peoples' created and led organization, we consider ourselves directly accountable and responsible to the communities and Peoples we work with and support through our organization and its far-reaching, responsive programming.



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